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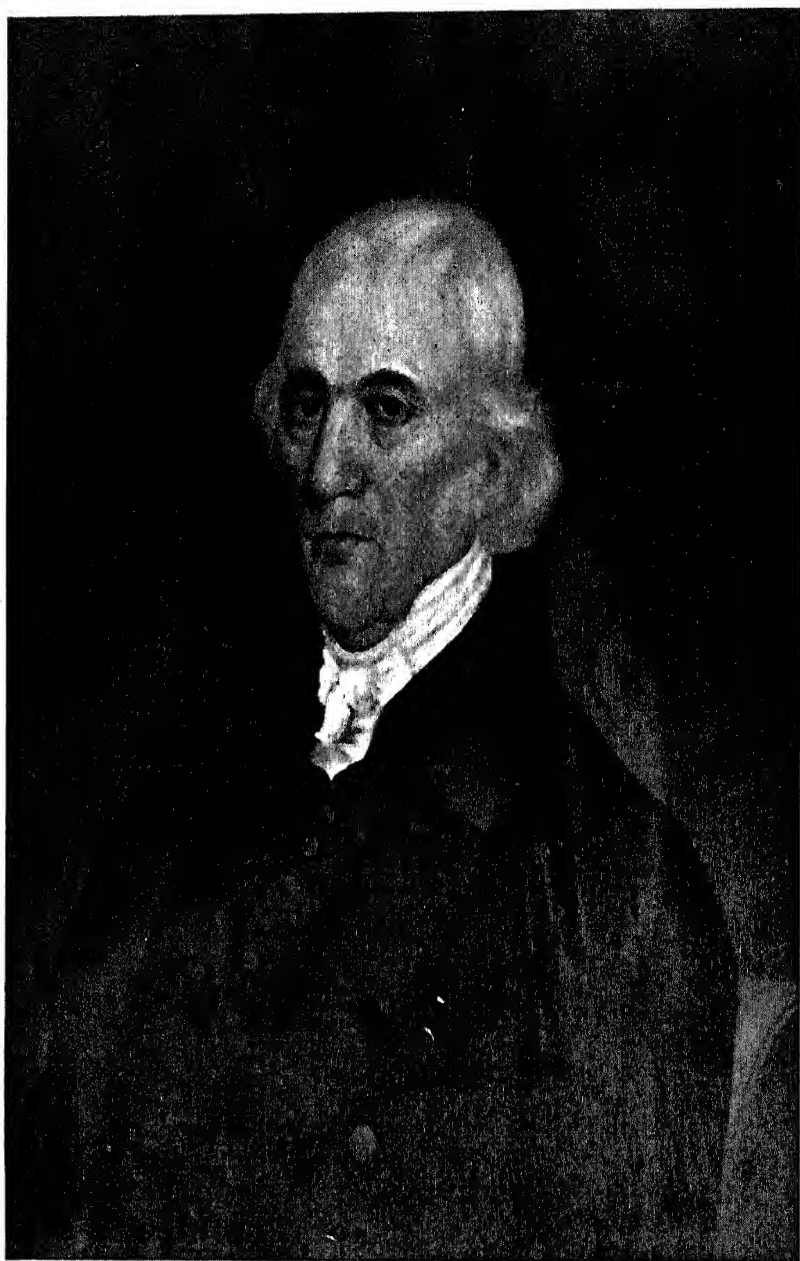
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PUBLICATION ONE  
Rochester The Water-Power City  
1812-1854

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I. COLONEL NATHANIEL ROCHESTER AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY

ROCHESTER  
THE  
WATER-POWER CITY  
1812-1854

BY  
BLAKE MCKELVEY  
*Assistant City Historian, Rochester, New York*



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## PREFACE

THIS HISTORY of Rochester represents a remarkable municipal achievement. Under the laws of the state of New York, the towns and cities of this state are required to appoint town or city historians. The city of Rochester long ago met this requirement; the appointee to this office and the persons whom he selects to assist him in his duties are paid from municipal funds, which form a part of the budget of the Rochester Public Library; the City Historian and the Assistant City Historian are civil servants, with tenure similar to that of other civil servants under the civil service laws. They are free to pursue their work in the true scholarly spirit, and they have met at all times with the most cordial support of the public authorities. The present volume represents if not a unique, at any rate a most striking, achievement, the preparation of a history of an important American city on the basis of careful research, exact scholarship, and expert judgment all provided for by municipal funds. It was undertaken by Dr. McKelvey when he first assumed his post as Assistant City Historian; it has been pushed forward in the midst of other duties; and its completion is a notable landmark in the history of American historical writing.

Yet more than this can be said. Not only the preparation, but also the publication, of the work is a municipal enterprise. An eminent citizen of Rochester, Miss Kate Gleason, left some years ago a fund in memory of her teacher of history, Miss Amelia Brettelle, to be used for the establishment of a department of history in the Rochester Public Library. With the gracious encouragement of members of her family, and with the legal approval of the proper municipal authorities, the Surrogate's Court, the Corporation Counsel, and the City Council, the use of a portion of this fund was made possible in connection with the expenses of publication. Miss Gleason was herself one of the most devoted friends of her native city; and it seems peculiarly appropriate that she should thus have a part in a permanent record of its early years.

I am glad to pay tribute here to the industry, good judgment, and wide knowledge which Dr. McKelvey has brought to the completion of the manuscript. He has made the story not only interesting in itself, but also a part of the larger story of American history in general; he has, with remarkable insight and assiduity, recreated the life of the city in its formative period, and maintained the broad perspective



which is essential to an understanding of the story. His book deserves to be read not only by those who are interested in Rochester, but also by those who are interested in the growth of urban living in America.

Throughout the execution of this task, the City Historian's office owes much to the cordial collaboration and support which it has always received from the Director of the Rochester Public Library, Dr. John A. Lowe. He has, from the outset, encouraged and believed in the scholarly function which that office ought to perform; and he has done much to make its performance possible.

DEXTER PERKINS  
*City Historian*

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

ROCHESTER'S DEVELOPMENT athwart the major east-west population and trade highway of the second quarter of the nineteenth century not only accounts for many of its features but also links the local story with main trends in American history. Analysis of the forces playing within the evolving urban scene at the Genesee falls affords distinctive rewards, both to the student of social history and to the citizen interested in his local heritage, for within the space of a short half-century a neglected backwoods site was transformed into a thriving industrial city which ranked seventeenth in size in the nation at the mid-century and had already attained a measure of cultural self-sufficiency. The peculiar influence of its falls site, the advantages and limitations of its valley hinterland, as well as those of its first great trade artery, the Erie Canal, the flood of Americans surging westward, swollen toward the end of the period by a fresh stream of immigrants, the sweep of religious wildfire—these and many other factors conditioned the community's development and add interest to its story.

Fortunately, the unprecedented rapidity of its early growth stimulated sufficient interest in the town's history to prompt a versatile editor and politician, Henry O'Reilly, to write the lengthy and creditable *Sketches of Rochester*, published at Rochester early in 1838. This pioneer city historian depicted Rochester as sailing down the main stream of American life, an interpretation shared by Mrs. Basil Hall, who found the Genesee mill town of 1827 "the best place we have yet seen for giving strangers an idea of the newness of this country." Alexander MacKay, another British visitor (who studied law for a time in the office of a local judge), declared near the mid-century, "There is no other town in America the history of which better illustrates the rapid progress of material and moral civilization in the United States than that of the city of Rochester." Whether correct or not, these opinions animated a long succession of collectors and chroniclers whose labors have been of invaluable assistance to the present historian.

These fairly abundant materials have facilitated a selective treatment of the subject. The object has been to use only those details, events, and personalities which help to fill in the essential features of the community pattern and to move the story along. An effort has been made to keep both the chronology and the setting clearly in mind in the treat-

ment of each event and to depict action where possible in terms of familiar residents or recognizable groups. Many important personalities have no doubt been neglected, as it would be impossible even to number all who contributed to the city's development. Yet the role of the individual was much more important in the Water-Power City than in its industrial and institutionalized successor, prompting an effort here to recount enough of the activities of a limited number of Rochesterians to give the city's story some of its proper human flavor. Not only the life-span of many of the pioneer villagers, but the primary community trends, as well as the changing national environment, helped to terminate the city's first growth cycle in the mid-fifties, facilitating its study in one volume as the "Water-Power City."

Within the larger unity of the Water-Power City's development, five successive stages appeared. Thus it was on a retarded frontier, surrounded by deep forests, penetrated only by rough roads and hazardous waterways, that the village was born in 1812. It was a hamlet of small, boarded shacks, warmed by crude fireplaces, clustering around a couple of primitive lumber and grist mills, which became, in the decade following its incorporation in 1817, America's first boom town. It was a town of freshly painted white houses, sprawling astride a river whose falls turned a hundred rumbling millstones, which fed the long rows of canal boats that glided slowly across an impressive stone aqueduct bearing the products of a fertile valley toward eastern markets. It was the bustling residents of the emerging Flour City who worried about the recurrent fires, the occasional plagues, and the uncertain market; who complained of muddy streets, poor water, and an inefficient police; who debated conflicting religious doctrines, sought improved educational facilities, and expressed themselves in boisterous political campaigns, crude rollicking amusements, and violent journalistic blasts. It was the children of these residents who, with newcomers from the East and from across the Atlantic, brought about recovery from the first major depression by developing fresh fields of enterprise, adjusted themselves to a more sober rate of growth as well as a more respectable code of mores, and finally settled down at the mid-century amidst the larger opportunities and more complex problems of the developing Flower City.

*Rochester*  
*June 1, 1944*

BLAKE McKELVEY

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MY FIRST OBLIGATION is to the citizens of Rochester whose interest in the community's history has fostered this study. Perhaps the attention given to local traditions more than a century ago, when Rochesterians could still remember their early boom days, has itself grown into a fond tradition. At all events the invitation received just eight years ago to study and write Rochester's history opened a most agreeable assignment, and I must express my gratitude for the hearty welcome and the generous opportunity for independent study thus afforded.

Continued residence in a city such as Rochester inevitably breaks down some of the detachment which a scholar desires to maintain toward his subject. Nevertheless, thanks to my upbringing in consecutive Methodist parsonages in central Pennsylvania, I early enjoyed a fairly intimate living acquaintance with a half-dozen towns and cities ranging from a small village the size of Rochester in the early 1820's up through all the successive stages under study—an experience of great assistance in the effort to visualize the community's growth. To the background for comparison thus provided, later pursuit of local history in Pennsylvania and of urban history in Chicago have added perspective for the study of Rochester. Much to be desired, however, is the familiar and understanding view generally denied to the stranger. I am therefore especially grateful for the cordial associations enjoyed with members of the Rochester Historical Society and other organizations whose roots reach into the city's past, for to some extent these friends have relieved me of the handicaps of the outlander.

I am, of course, heavily indebted to a long list of collectors and compilers who labored to amass the records upon which this account has been in considerable part constructed. Starting more than a century ago with Henry O'Reilly, the work of assembling and preserving documents was continued by such men as George H. Harris, Howard L. Osgood, William H. Samson, and Edward R. Foreman, to mention but a few. Several choice files of letter and other documents in the Rochester, Scrantom, Reynolds, Weed, O'Reilly, Selye, Clarke, and Schermerhorn collections, as well as many smaller in volume, have supplied intimate details, revealing much of the character of Rochester during successive eras.

I have enjoyed convenient access to most of these materials, housed

today in the Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library. The resources of the Division have been enriched by the deposit there of the bibliographic materials gathered during the past half-century by the Rochester Historical Society and the Reynolds Library. Special thanks are due to my associates on the Public Library staff, Miss Emma B. Swift, Mr. J. Gormly Miller (now on leave in the armed services), and others who have patiently assisted in the progress of this study.

Generous aid has been received from those in charge of the local history archives at the University of Rochester, the Wood Library at Canandaigua, and the Ontario County Historical Society library at the same place. Mr. R. W. G. Vail and Miss Edna L. Jacobsen of the New York State Library, the late Mr. Alexander J. Wall of the New York Historical Society in New York, and Mr. Robert W. Bingham of the Buffalo Historical Society have provided valuable assistance, and a very special service was rendered by Dr. Philip Bauer of the National Archives in procuring photostatic copies of manuscripts in private hands in Washington. Numerous individuals have kindly shown me rare manuscripts in their possession, and several extensive private collections have been opened to my inspection, notably that of Mr. George Skivington, containing among other items a voluminous file of Greig papers, that of Mrs. Buell Mills comprising the papers of Freeman Clarke, the Elisabeth Selden Spencer Eaton letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Selden Rogers in New York City, and the Schermerhorn collection in possession of Mrs. Rudolph Stanley-Brown, Washington, D. C.

I have profited considerably from unpublished studies conducted at the University of Rochester and elsewhere in various aspects of Rochester's history. These are referred to in the appropriate connections below, but I must mention here especially the master's thesis of Mr. Whitney Cross, now archivist at Cornell University, the master's thesis of Mr. Earl Weller, now Director of the Rochester Bureau of Municipal Research, and the doctor's thesis at Harvard University of Dr. Donald W. Gilbert, now Dean of Graduate Studies and Professor of Economics at the University of Rochester. The careful, intensive work of these and other students has greatly assisted my efforts to cover the whole range of the community's history down through 1854. Possibly my heaviest indebtedness in this respect is to the members of the National Youth Administration project who prepared an excellent index of the Rochester papers from the first issues to far beyond the period studied.

Many kind friends have assisted with suggestions and criticism, although, of course, responsibility for the final product must rest on my own shoulders. Professor Dexter Perkins as City Historian and Dr. John A. Lowe as Public Librarian have been in touch with this study from its inception and have provided much encouragement. Professor Perkins, Dr. Aaron Abell of Nazareth College in Rochester, and

Professor A. M. Schlesinger of Harvard University have each read the entire manuscript and proffered constructive criticisms. I am especially grateful to Professor Schlesinger not only for his careful perusal of this manuscript but also for his thoughtful mentorship over a period of several years in the broader study of urban history. Dr. Arthur C. Parker, Dr. Glyndon Van Deusen, Dr. Bert J. Loewenberg, Dr. Rolf King, Dr. William A. Ritchie, Mr. Arthur Bestor, Jr., and Mr. Arthur Pound have each read special portions of the manuscript and contributed valuable suggestions. Aid has been given from time to time by Mr. Alexander M. Stewart, a specialist in the French period, Mr. Morley Turpin and Major Wheeler Case, steeped in the lore of the pioneers, and Mr. Walter Cassebeer, careful student of local architecture. Much more than secretarial assistance has been rendered at varied stages of this project by Miss Annie H. Croughton, Miss Harriett Julia Naylor, Miss Ruth Marsh, and especially Miss Dorothy S. Truesdale, whose painstaking work, including frequent checking of documents, has helped not only to eliminate disturbing errors but also to fill in spacious gaps in the story. The index has been prepared in large part by Miss Jean Dinse, to whom I am duly grateful. To my wife, Jean Trepp, I owe sincere gratitude for much patient forbearance, many repetitious auditions, and unfailingly tactful criticism during the several years of the study's progress.



A word or two should be added in regard to my sources. The inclusion of a bibliography seems unnecessary in view of the full character of the footnotes. Perhaps many of the notes are much too full, but it has seemed wise, where a development can best be traced through scattered newspaper accounts, to supply a full list, although the incident to which the citation is attached may be described specifically in only one or two references. Readers who are interested in an over-all view of the area's historical literature are referred to the author's "A History of Historical Writing in the Rochester Area," *Rochester History*, April, 1944.



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ROCHESTER  
THE WATER-POWER CITY  
1812-1854



## CHAPTER I

### GEOLOGIC AND HUMAN BACKGROUNDS

IF EVER a town's site was prepared and its character largely determined by the varied actions of an ever-abundant water supply, it was the Rochester of a hundred years ago. So well was this site designed for a milling and trading center that in 1812, when permanent settlers arrived in the wake of the first great wave of westward migration across New York State, few traces of earlier habitation remained. Neither the successive Indian invasions nor the pioneer farmers who eventually displaced them found the lower Genesee the ideal spot for settlement. Yet the character of the city which ultimately developed, predetermined in many respects by the waterfalls, was considerably influenced as well by its human antecedents—influenced negatively by the absence of previous local achievements, and positively as the lore of earlier days stirred the imagination of numerous residents. The fascinating evidences of the city's geologic foundations and the pageantry of the valley's human background still prompt Rochesterians to seek the roots of their history in the hazy antiquities of the beautiful Genesee Country.

#### NATURE CARVES A CHOICE URBAN SITE<sup>1</sup>

It was approximately two hundred million years ago, near the end of the Paleozoic Era, the third great interval of geologic time, that the Genesee region emerged from the retreating sea waters which had long covered much of what is now the eastern part of the United States. A deep covering of rock strata had been slowly built up, layer upon layer, over the igneous or volcanic rock base.<sup>2</sup> Thus elevated, the Genesee

<sup>1</sup> This summary account is based on the researches of Professor Herman LeRoy Fairchild, whose many excellent articles have been well summarized with profuse illustrations in his *Geologic Story of the Genesee Valley and Western New York* (Rochester, 1928). Thomas G. Payne, *The Genesee Country: A Field Guide to Various Natural Features which Reveal the Geologic Past* (Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences, Guide Bulletin, No. 5, Rochester, 1938), presents a more recent comprehensive survey of the subject and provides an excellent geologic map of the Genesee region. See also Chris A. Hartnagel, "Before the Coming of Man," Alexander C. Flick, ed., *History of the State of New York* (New York, 1933-37), I, 28-39.

<sup>2</sup> Charles S. Prosser, "The Thickness of the Devonian and Silurian Rocks . . . along the . . . Line of the Genesee River," *Proceedings of the Rochester Academy*

region stood exposed during the one hundred million years of the Mesozoic, or fourth, geologic era, permitting the untiring forces of nature gradually to disintegrate the upper strata and transport the particles in shifting streams down the "Ontario," Ohio, and Susquehanna valleys, until a great plain was formed practically at sea level. A luxuriant foliage of sub-tropical verdure spread over this region, and the first mammals appeared.

The great continental uplift at the beginning of the Cenozoic or last geologic era elevated the plain to form the Appalachian plateau, thus starting anew the erosional cycle. In due time the first Genesee River formed, modeling for itself a comfortable rolling valley in which to meander sluggishly northward through the course of present Irondequoit Bay toward the westward flowing Ontarian River. A warm climate nurtured a rich vegetation not greatly different from that of today.

The scene changed radically when, approximately half a million years ago, a climatic shift started the formation of the great ice sheet which spread out in a southwesterly direction from the Labrador region. The advance of the glacier continued until it had pushed beyond the southern border of New York State. Many thousand years later during the glacier's slow retreat, when numerous and significant transformations were being made in the old Genesee Valley, the site for the city of Rochester was finally carved out.

A succession of twenty glacial lakes formed between the southern highlands and the retreating ice dam. The thick sedimentary deposits spread over these temporary lake beds (composed of silt gathered by highland streams from the south, till brought by the glacier from the north, and the rich limestone particles scraped up from the broad dolomite outcrop that stretched across the northern portion of the state) provided the Genesee Country with the basis for its proverbial fertility,<sup>3</sup> its wealth of clay, sand, gravel, and peat deposits.<sup>4</sup>

Among the more prominent landmarks left by the retreating ice mass were the smooth, oval-shaped, clay blisters formed under the melting ice sheet—the curious ridges which are scattered across southern Monroe County and eastward towards Syracuse, the world's most remarkable drumlin formation. On Rochester's immediate southern border appears another striking glacial remain—the string of pinnacle-shaped hills,

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of *Science*, II (1892), 49-104. Prosser reviews in detail the findings taken from the many deep wells drilled in the valley from time to time.

<sup>3</sup> "Soil Survey of Monroe County, New York," U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Bulletin*, Series 1933, No. 17 (Washington, D. C., 1938); see also similar surveys for Livingston County in 1908, Ontario County in 1910, Steuben County in 1931, and Wayne County in 1902.

<sup>4</sup> Clifton J. Sarle, "Economic Geology of Monroe County and Contiguous Territory," *New York State Museum 56th Annual Report: 1902* (Albany, 1904), pp. 175-1106.

known as kames, formed at the points where numerous glacial summer streams emptied into the pent-up Lake Dawson during a long period when the balance between sun and snow stranded the glacier's southern edge over the site of Rochester. The waters of Lake Dawson found a shallow but broad outlet eastward past the site of Fairport and Newark towards Montezuma, whence they flowed more swiftly to a junction with the Mohawk Valley—thus channelling a course later followed by the Erie Canal. When the retreat of the Syracuse lobe of the glacier opened a lower outlet through the Oswego and Mohawk valleys, the waters of Lake Dawson escaped, and a new level was found in Lake Iroquois, the last of the great glacial lakes.

At varied intervals during its retreat the glacier dropped sufficient deposits to block the pre-glacial drainage valleys, notably at Portageville and at Rush, compelling the Genesee at each of these points to carve new post-glacial channels. The diversion at Rush forced the cutting of the lower Genesee gorge by a succession of waterfalls, destined finally to play a significant role in the growth of the city. This great carving operation started during the period when Lake Iroquois covered the northern portion of the site of Rochester. After plunging over the hard ledge of dolomitic limestone (known today as the Lockport Escarpment or Big Ridge which extends east and west as a resistant outcrop and forms the cap rock for the great Niagara cataract), the Genesee spread out over a broad delta dropping the rich deposits which form the loose soil of Greece and Irondequoit. At the same time a long east-west sandbar formed a half mile or so off shore, the Little Ridge which later attracted so much admiration and speculation from the travelers along the Ridge Road.

The further disintegration of the great ice dam finally permitted the escape of part of the waters of Lake Iroquois through the St. Lawrence channel, then depressed below sea level, thus creating an elongated Gilbert Gulf which reached into a portion of the bed of present Lake Ontario. The Genesee was forced to extend its channel through its old delta and to cut a new gorge in the formerly submerged rock strata. A second great falls began this carving process some distance north of the present lake shore, cutting fairly rapidly back through the soft shale and sandstone strata, digging a deep chasm and slowly gaining on the first cataract which was only with difficulty eating its way southward through the Lockport ledge. In the task of digging out this 200-foot thick ledge of dolomite limestone the upper layers were in time stripped back, forming the series of low cataracts, for many years described as the upper falls, a half mile south of the main falls. The division of the lower falls into two successive cascades was caused by the presence of two resistant layers of rock, the upper one some twenty feet above the lower.



The progressive disintegration of the glacier had meanwhile removed the great weight depressing the land mass of Lower Canada, and a slanting uplift occurred, just sufficient to entrap a portion of the old Ontarian Valley and form Lake Ontario, which finally assumed its present boundaries approximately ten thousand years ago. As the great lake slowly filled, its waters crept up the deep Genesee gorge to the foot of the lower falls and invaded the parallel old Genesee Valley to form Irondequoit Bay. Surface erosion on the old delta cut the many gullies which now add charm to Durand-Eastman Park, while the river slowly deposited its burden of silt in the submerged gorge until an ideal shipping channel was seriously clogged. The slanting uplift which created Lake Ontario served as well to bottle up several fresh water reservoirs on the streams south of Rochester and sufficiently dammed the shallow Genesee to make the river navigable for fifty miles south of the upper rapids at Rochester.

The slight tilting of the rock strata likewise obstructed the northward drainage of the lands east and west of the river. The outcropping ledges forced the streams to seek an east or west course, following in some places the channels of earlier glacial rivers, thus providing ideal canoe trails for the Iroquois and early white traders and opening natural routes for the cross-state canals, railroads, and highways of a later day. In many places deposits of glacial drift blocked these streams, forming vast swamp areas, though gradually in the course of centuries most of the swamps were filled in by vegetation advancing in successive soil-building stages.<sup>5</sup> The triumph of the forest invasion was widespread, but occasional peat bogs endured long enough to entrap specimens of man's huge predecessors, the mastodons.<sup>6</sup> A sycamore swamp and salt lick remained to fringe the western limits of man's first settlement at the Genesee falls, contributing a health hazard which was only in part offset by the abundant water supply thus assured. A heavy primitive forest of "maple, beach, ash, oak, elm, basswood, hickory, chestnut, cherry, pine, poplar, butternut, black walnut and sycamore"<sup>7</sup> covered most of the site of present Rochester, while a thick pine grove spread over adjoining Irondequoit, providing fuel and lumber for the early

<sup>5</sup> Paul A. Stewart and William D. Merrell, "The Bergen Swamp: An Ecological Study," *Proceedings of the Rochester Academy of Science*, VIII (1937), 209-262.

<sup>6</sup> C. A. Hartnagel and S. C. Bishop, "The Mastodons, Mammoths, and Other Pleistocene Mammals of New York State," New York State Museum *Bulletin* (Jan.-Feb., 1921), pp. 34-39. Five separate mastodon remains have been uncovered and fairly reliably identified within the area of Monroe County since 1830. The most notable find was the nine-foot tusk dug up by Genesee Valley Canal workmen at the corner of Plymouth and Caledonia Avenues in 1837.

<sup>7</sup> Florence Beckwith and Mary E. Macauley, "Plants of Monroe County, New York, and Adjacent Territory," *Proceedings of the Rochester Academy of Science*, III (1894), 13.

villagers. And when eventually the log and frame structures were outgrown, a supply of limestone was available a few feet under ground, either as a solid foundation for the taller buildings, or as the rough building materials used in the early mills and other stone structures.<sup>8</sup>

Scarcely could a more fortunate combination of natural advantages have been assembled had an All-wise Providence set itself the task of preparing a site for Rochester! The moving force throughout these successive geologic ages had been the area's abundant water supply, operating in varied forms and manifold ways, and it was more than fitting that the chief dynamic force available on man's arrival should be the water power of the several Genesee falls. But the experience of successive human invasions was to demonstrate that the site had been so designed as to attract only an advanced commercial and industrial settlement, such as the New England migrants of the early nineteenth century were to build.

#### LOCAL ANTIQUITIES AND CLASHING EMPIRES

For a period of several thousand years primitive red men are supposed to have wandered about the Genesee Country, though few indications of their activities remain in the Rochester area. Later waves of more advanced Indian cultures swept over the region, and the first Europeans made their appearance, playing minor roles in the widespread struggles of contending empires, but the chief contribution made by these varied peoples to Rochester's development proved to be the manner in which their rival enterprises cancelled each other and thus postponed stable beginnings.

Three generations of diligent archeologists have finally woven the scant traces of local Indian occupation into a fascinating story.<sup>9</sup> A few camp sites, found along the bluffs of the lower Genesee gorge and about

<sup>8</sup> Herman LeRoy Fairchild and J. Foster Warner, "Building Stones of Rochester," Rochester Historical Society, *Publications*, XII, 133-138.

<sup>9</sup> William A. Ritchie, *The Pre-Iroquoian Occupation of New York State* (Rochester: Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences, 1943), presents a well correlated account of the prehistory of the State, the product of many years of intensive excavation work and careful laboratory study of early camp sites and collections. Ritchie lists the contributions of most of his predecessors in local archeological research, but only three need mention here: Arthur C. Parker, whose "The First Human Occupation of the Rochester Region," R. H. S., *Pub.*, X, 19-48, is an excellent summary article to which is appended a bibliography of Dr. Parker's numerous writings on this subject; George H. Harris, whose contribution of the first fifteen chapters of William F. Peck's *Semi-Centennial History of the City of Rochester* (Syracuse, 1884), pp. 11-96, represents only the first fruits of researches which continued until Harris's death in 1893 (see his unpublished MSS at the University of Rochester); and Lewis H. Morgan, whose *League of the Iroquois* (Rochester, 1851) has been described as "the first scientific account of an Indian tribe ever given to the world."

Irondequoit Bay tell of hunting and fishing activities in this area by the earliest-known Archaic peoples, whose successive cultures have been pieced together with the aid of a host of bone, chipped or polished stone, and copper implements recently excavated at larger stations discovered elsewhere in western and central New York.<sup>10</sup> Old local traditions of scattered mounds in the Irondequoit vicinity (unfortunately explored before the development of techniques for the interpretation of artifacts) have now been substantiated by the excavation of several small burial mounds in the Genesee Valley and one near the mouth of Irondequoit Bay. This invasion of Hopervellian "Mound Builders" and kindred peoples from the Ohio area is marked by new handicraft products, including pottery and pipes of clay and stone.<sup>11</sup> A later wave of migrants, equipped with a Woodland culture, known as the Owasco, left its distinctive pottery, pipes, bone tools, and stone hunting equipment at several small camp and village sites in the Genesee Valley and along the shores of Manitou Ponds and Irondequoit Bay. The settlement on a knoll overlooking the Genesee on the present University of Rochester River Campus may have belonged to this occupation, as did the camp site more recently discovered during building operations on Albermarle Street.<sup>12</sup>

Still another Indian migration brought the Iroquois into this area approximately a century and a half before the arrival of the first white men. The Iroquois, who seem to have absorbed many of their Owasco predecessors, from which culture they took over numerous elements,<sup>13</sup> had a virile, warlike character and developed an unusual talent for organization. To their staunch tribal loyalties, a new tie was added when five of the tribes scattered across New York State joined in the famous League of the Iroquois, a defensive alliance designed to establish peace and security throughout this region. The League encouraged trade but likewise freed the home guard for more distant military adventures, both activities being facilitated by the central geographic position of these tribes and the excellent interior canoe routes of upper New York State. The earliest knowledge of the Iroquois to reach the

<sup>10</sup> Ritchie, *Pre-Iroquoian Occupation*, pp. 235-310.

<sup>11</sup> Ritchie, *Pre-Iroquoian Occupation*, pp. 112-227; George H. Harris, "Aboriginal History of Irondequoit," newspaper clipping, Harris MSS, No. 85, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>12</sup> George H. Harris MSS, Univ. of Rochester; William A. Ritchie, "Some Algonkian and Iroquoian Camp Sites Around Rochester," N. Y. State Archeological Association, *Researches and Transactions*, V, 3 (1927), pp. 43-49. Much larger sites, explored during the past decade in the western and southern parts of the State, demonstrate the sedentary nature of Owasco life in large fortified villages where deep storage pits, still containing corn and beans preserved by charring, have been excavated; see Ritchie, *Pre-Iroquoian Occupation*, pp. 29-102.

<sup>13</sup> Ritchie, *Pre-Iroquoian Occupation*, pp. 26-29, 41-46.

first white men on the St. Lawrence and the Hudson was of their aggressive warlike character, reports which came from the bitter rivals of the League.<sup>14</sup>

The Iroquois tribe which settled in the Genesee Country, known to the white men as the Senecas, built its villages on the hilltops in the neighborhood of the upper Genesee and on the highlands around the western Finger Lakes. Although, in accordance with Indian custom, new locations were chosen every decade or so, the Senecas in the course of more than four hundred years in the valley apparently never established a village closer to the site of Rochester than that found by La Salle fifteen miles south, at Totiakton (Rochester Junction) on Honeoye Creek. Nevertheless, the lower Genesee-Irondequoit area was a favorite hunting preserve, with several well-marked trails connecting traditional camp sites, such as that overlooking the Indian landing on Irondequoit Bay,<sup>15</sup> where hunting, trading, and war parties frequently stopped overnight.



Although the Senecas did not attempt to build in the Rochester area, they were successful in keeping it free of permanent white occupation for nearly two centuries after the first visitor, Étienne Brûlé, crossed the upper Genesee in 1615.<sup>16</sup> This region did, however, witness a share of the strife of these crucial years when the Iroquois, the French, and the English were vainly contending for dominance—dominance not on the battlefield alone, but in trade and religion as well.<sup>17</sup>

So far-reaching was the power of the Iroquois at the mid-seventeenth century<sup>18</sup> that the French sought to reach a workable understanding with them. A group of zealous missionaries and venturesome traders visited central New York in 1656 and again a decade later, erecting bark chapels and surveying the possibilities for trade. Most of these visitors came over the canoe routes from the east, seldom if ever reach-

<sup>14</sup> George T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois: A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison, 1940), pp. 13-37.

<sup>15</sup> Memoranda on interviews with old settlers, Harris MSS, No. 182, 65A, 78, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>16</sup> George B. Selden, "Étienne Brûlé: The First White Man in the Genesee Country," *R. H. S., Pub.*, IV, 83-102. Brûlé spent a part of the next year as a captive in a Seneca village, probably on the southern border of present Monroe County.

<sup>17</sup> The succession of able students who have labored in this field is a long one: William M. Beauchamp of Albany, General John S. Clark and the Reverend Charles Hawley of Cayuga, O. H. Marshall and Frank H. Severance of Buffalo, George H. Harris, William Samson, Nathaniel S. Olds, and Alexander M. Stewart of Rochester. The most detailed and painstaking chronology of these events is found in Mr. Stewart's "Early Catholic History in the Rochester Diocese," *Catholic Courier*, supplement, Oct. 25, 1934.

<sup>18</sup> Hunt, *Wars of the Iroquois*.

ing the Rochester area, but in the fall of 1656 Father Joseph Chaumonot visited the Seneca village on Boughton Hill, and in 1668 the Jesuits returned to established missions for a few years in four villages on the southern border of Monroe County, that of Father Jacques Fremin at Totiakton being their nearest approach to the site of Rochester.<sup>19</sup>

The first European visitor to the lower Genesee-Irondequoit area must have arrived between 1650 and 1655, if we may judge from the improved detail respecting this region shown on the Sanson map of the latter date.<sup>20</sup> The first recorded visit was that of Galinée and La Salle in August, 1669.<sup>21</sup> La Salle, endeavoring to open a trade route into the interior, followed the Indian trail from Irondequoit south to Totiakton and returned on two later occasions but failed to open a route up the Genesee. An account of the last of these visits is preserved in Hennepin's journal:

After some few Days, the Wind coming fair, Fathers *Gabriel, Zenobe*, and I went on board the Brigantine, and in a short time arriv'd in the River [Irondequoit Creek] of the Tsonnontouans [Senecas], which runs into the Lake *Ontario*, where we continu'd several Days, our Men being very busie in bartering their Commodities with the Natives, who flock'd in great numbers about us to see our brigantine, which they admir'd, and to exchange their Skins for Knives, Guns, Powder and Shot, but especially for Brandy, which they love above all things. In the meantime, we had built a small Cabin of Barks of Trees about half a League in the Woods, to perform Divine Service therein without interruption, and waited till all our Men had done their Business. *M. la Salle* arriv'd in a Canou about eight Days after.<sup>22</sup>

When these varied missionary and commercial overtures failed to win the coöperation of the Iroquois, whose trade with Albany was then becoming profitable, the authorities in New France adopted sterner methods. Thus in July, 1687, Denonville's punitive expedition arrived off Irondequoit Bay, where approximately three thousand French and Indian allies landed on the beach. Narrowly escaping ambush on the

<sup>19</sup> Stewart, "Early Catholic History"; N. S. Olds, "The Jesuits and Their Missions in the Genesee Country," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 121-131; Charles Hawley, "Early Chapters of Seneca History: 1656-1684," Cayuga County Historical Society, *Collections* (Auburn, N. Y., 1884), III, 22-89.

<sup>20</sup> Frank H. Severance, *An Old Frontier of France* (New York, 1917), I (Buffalo Historical Society, *Publications*, XX), 6-7; part of Nicholas Sanson's map of 1656 is reprinted as Plate II (p. 396) in the fine collection of ten early maps of the New York region appended to William M. Beauchamp's *History of the New York Iroquois* (Albany, 1905). See also Plate 20-B in Charles O. Paullin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States* (New York, 1932).

<sup>21</sup> Louis P. Kellogg, ed., "The Journey of Dollier and Galinée: 1669-1670," *Early Narratives of the Northwest* (New York, 1917), pp. 177-188.

<sup>22</sup> Father Louis Hennepin, *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America* (Reuben G. Thwaites edition, Chicago, 1903), p. 101.

march inland, the army succeeded in burning several bark villages and destroyed many acres of corn at the cost of more French than Seneca casualties.<sup>23</sup> Although the havoc wrought within those two weeks was soon remedied by the Senecas, relations with the French were not repaired for several years.

The British at Albany, secretly rejoicing over the results of the new French policy, hastened, on the outbreak of war in Europe a year later, to enlist the Iroquois in an attack on New France.<sup>24</sup> Albany fur traders pressed their enterprises more vigorously,<sup>25</sup> and occasional scouts followed Wentworth Greenhalgh, who in 1677 had been the first to ride horseback over the Indian trails into the Genesee Country.<sup>26</sup> For more than a decade the British enjoyed an undisputed advantage in western New York, yet by the turn of the century French missionaries and traders were able to resume their visits. A Canadian, Louis Thomas de Joncaire, long held captive by the Senecas, became, as an adopted member of that tribe, the chief promoter of French interests.<sup>27</sup> Fleets of canoes loaded with furs again made their way from Irondequoit or Sodus Bays toward Quebec, while Seneca young men took an increasing part in the traffic with tribes on the western lakes.<sup>28</sup> French sloops appeared on Lake Ontario.<sup>29</sup> In 1702, Madame Cadillac and several female associates, en route to join their husbands in the new post at Detroit, were the first white women to pass the mouth of the Genesee.<sup>30</sup>

The British and French rivalry in this area came to a head when both factions attempted to establish a trading post at Irondequoit. The French were the first to arrive, as the six Albany traders who visited the bay in 1716 discovered. Five years later the British sent their Indian interpreter, Laurence Clausen, with Captain Peter Schuyler and

<sup>23</sup> Chevalier de Baugy, "Journal of the Expedition of Marquis de Denonville against the Iroquois: 1687," tr. by Nathaniel S. Olds, R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 3-56; Marquis de Denonville, *Narrative of the Expedition . . . against the Senecas in 1687*, tr. by O. H. Marshall (New York, 1848); George B. Selden, "Expedition of the Marquis de Denonville against the Seneca Indians: 1687," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 1-82.

<sup>24</sup> New York Historical Society, *Collections* (1869), p. 393.

<sup>25</sup> "Mr. [Cadwallader] Colden's Memoir on the Fur Trade," E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (Albany, 1853-58), V, 726-733; A. H. Buffington, "The Policy of Albany and English Westward Expansion," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, VIII, 327-366.

<sup>26</sup> "Wentworth Greenhalgh's Journal of a Tour to the Indians of Western New York," O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York*, III, 250-252.

<sup>27</sup> Frank H. Severance, "The Story of Joncaire," Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, IX, 83-219.

<sup>28</sup> H. A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (New Haven, 1930), pp. 50, 53, 85.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Cruickshank, "Early Traders and Trade Routes in Ontario and the West: 1760-1783," in William H. Samson Note Book, III, 113-131, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>30</sup> Severance, *An Old Frontier*, I, 198-200.

a party of eight men to build an English trading post.<sup>31</sup> Apparently neither venture had much importance, for the French decided to concentrate their attention on a new fort at Niagara, while the British attempted to do the same at Oswego. Laurence Clausen made frequent visits to the Indian villages and spent the winter of 1737-38 among the Senecas, negotiating the lease of a tract six hundred square miles in area at Irondequoit, including the site of Rochester, in an attempt to head off possible French claims.<sup>32</sup> An itinerant English smith, traveling among the Seneca villages for extended periods during these years, offered little competition to the resident smiths and visiting priests of the French, whose more vigorous western policy, together with the leadership of the younger Joncaires, won increasing support, particularly from the western Senecas on the upper Genesee.<sup>33</sup>

The French, playing the more active role on the Niagara frontier during the first half of the eighteenth century, wrote the journals that provide the earliest descriptions of the Genesee falls. In spite of several previous visits by Europeans to this area, no description of the falls<sup>34</sup> was published prior to 1744, when Father Pierre de Charlevoix issued his *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, including an account of his visit to North America in 1721. Charlevoix tells of an exploratory voyage along the lake shore from Irondequoit Bay westward, made in May of that year, but confesses that he did not enter the Genesee and did not learn until later of its remarkable succession of cascades.<sup>35</sup> The description he gives, received as he says from a trusted officer (Joncaire),<sup>36</sup> is reasonably accurate and no doubt provided the information for Bellin's Map of the Lakes of Canada, included in the same volume. Here the

<sup>31</sup> Charles H. McIlwain, ed., *An Abridgment of the Indian Affairs . . . Transacted in the Colony of New York . . . by Peter Wraaxall* (Cambridge, 1915), pp. 113, 119-120, 138-139, 144; N. Y. Hist. Soc., *Coll.* (1869), pp. 482-487; O'Callaghan, *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York*, V, 632-633, 641-642, 666.

<sup>32</sup> New York Assembly *Journal* (1737), p. 705; Severance, *An Old Frontier*, I, 334-342. The deed has been located by Mr. Morley B. Turpin, until recently archivist of the University of Rochester Library, in New York Colonial MSS at Albany, endorsed "Land Papers," vol. 13, p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> Severance, *An Old Frontier*, I, 303-332.

<sup>34</sup> A bare mention of the Genesee falls was attached as a note to Father Galinée's map of 1670, where he reports, apparently from hearsay: "Here is a cataract where there is good fishing for barbues." The map of Father Raffex, prepared in 1688, shows a longer Genesee but does not indicate the location or otherwise mention the existence of any falls. See copies of these maps and a discussion of their content in N. S. Olds, "From LaSalle to Indian Allan," R. H. S., *Pub.*, X, 65-73.

<sup>35</sup> Pierre de Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage . . . dans L'Amérique Septentrionale, Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (Paris, 1744), V, 330-331.

<sup>36</sup> Samson Note Book, VI, 175. William Samson gives George Harris credit for this identification.

river is named the "Casconchihagon" and is described as "a river unknown to geographers, full of falls and rapids."<sup>37</sup>

Seven years later Father François Picquet found time during a missionary journey along the lake shore to visit the falls. After his Indian companions had killed forty-two rattlesnakes discovered at the foot of the lower falls, the good Father made the pioneer first-hand observations as recorded in the *Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses* (later abridged and translated by O'Callaghan):

The first [falls] which appear in sight in ascending [the Genesee] resemble much the great Cascade at Saint Cloud, except that they have not been ornamented and do not seem so high, but they possess natural beauties which render them very curious. The second, a quarter of a mile higher, are less considerable, yet are remarkable. The third, also a quarter of a league higher, has beauties truly admirable by its curtains and falls which form also, as at Niagara, a charming proportion and variety. They may be one hundred and some feet high. In the intervals between the falls, there are a hundred little cascades which present likewise a curious spectacle; and if the altitude of each chute were joined together and they made but one as at Niagara, the height would, perhaps, be four hundred feet; but there is four times less water than at the Niagara Fall which will cause the latter to pass, forever, as a Wonder perhaps unique in the World.<sup>38</sup>

As the British were destined to triumph in their far-flung struggles with the French, it was fitting that the first sketches of the Genesee falls should be made by one of their officers, Captain T. Davies of the Royal Regiment of Artillery.<sup>39</sup> It is probable, but not certain, that Davies accompanied the Prideaux-Johnson expedition which effected

<sup>37</sup> Charlevoix, *Journal d'un Voyage*, V, 409. An excellent account of the early maps descriptive of this area may be found in Severance, *An Old Frontier*, I, 6-10.

<sup>38</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documentary History of the State of New York* (Albany, 1850), I, 284. Varied measurements are given for the Genesee falls. Henry O'Reilly, *Settlement of the West: Sketches of Rochester, with Incidental Notices of Western New York* (Rochester, 1838), p. 89, gave the measurements of the lowermost falls as 84 feet, the next as 25 feet, and the main falls as 96 feet. The U. S. Geological Survey maps of 1931 show the distances between the water level at the respective dams as 97 feet for the lower, 42 feet for the next, and 90 feet for the upper, while the Rochester Gas and Electric Company measures its water heads as 94 feet, 28 + 15, and 92 feet respectively. The volume of water is likewise variously measured, but the Surface Water Survey made by the U. S. Department of the Interior in 1939 gives an average discharge of 2,655 cubic feet per second below the lower Genesee falls, as against 190,800 for the Niagara River at Buffalo, which makes Father Picquet's comparison appear far fetched, though no doubt the Genesee flow has decreased more than has the Niagara in the intervening two centuries.

<sup>39</sup> E. R. Foreman, "Casconchiagon: The Great River," R. H. S., *Pub.*, V, 140-146, where the sketches were reproduced for the first time. See also George Moss's note on Davies, *Pub. of the R. H. S.* (1892), p. 55. See Plate II, No. 1.



the capture of Fort Niagara in 1759.<sup>40</sup> The unlucky French commandant, Captain François Pouchot, unable to believe that the cause of New France was lost, returned to Europe to write, in his *Memoir Upon the Late War in North America*, of the strategic importance of occupying the Genesee Valley.<sup>41</sup> But the French never again enjoyed that prospect.



The triumph of the British did not immediately alter the situation on the lower Genesee. The widespread Indian uprising of 1763, proving that the tribes were still a force to be reckoned with, prompted the British to woo their support and that of the French in Canada by a tolerant observance of many old traditions.<sup>42</sup> Thus the fur trade, as well as the administration of affairs in the western country, was centered in Canada as before, while the Proclamation Line of 1763 clearly reserved the Genesee Country together with most of trans-Appalachia as Indian territory. To be sure, the Senecas and their Iroquois brothers no longer held the balance of power between two great empires, and they missed the powder, rum, and other supplies allowed them by rival commissaries during the preceding half-century of intermittent warfare.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the westward migration, already thrusting against the tribes in the more accessible Ohio Valley, did not as yet disturb the Senecas. The population movement was, if anything, in the opposite direction as the British sought the release of white captives from the Seneca villages, though the small party of soldiers sent to Irondequoit for that purpose in 1764 met with little success.<sup>44</sup> The Genesee Valley retained much of its primitive forest life, amply meriting the Indian name Gen-nis-he-yo, signifying beautiful valley. This the youthful captive, Mary Jemison, found so agreeable that she was content to rear her part-Indian children in native fashion, stubbornly refusing to leave her Genesee bottom lands near Gardeau.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Sir William Johnson Papers*, III, 49-50, 61, 63; R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 187-191. The army of more than 2000 soldiers, not counting several hundred Indians, pitched camp at Irondequoit on July 2nd, remaining until the 4th in order to cook a supply of provisions and for other purposes. A Royal Regiment of Artillery accompanied the expedition and was stationed at Niagara for several years thereafter. Severance, *An Old Frontier*, II, 276, 281-282.

<sup>41</sup> Capt. [François] Pouchot, *Memoir Upon the Late War in North America* . . . 1755-1760, 3 vols. (Paris, 1781), tr. by F. B. Hough, 2 vols. (Roxbury, Mass., 1866).

<sup>42</sup> Clarence W. Alvord, *Mississippi Valley in British Politics* (Cleveland, 1917), I, 170-171, 216-228.

<sup>43</sup> O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 353-354; Alvord, *The Mississippi Valley*, I, 185-187.

<sup>44</sup> George H. Harris, "The Markhams of Rush," Livingston County Historical Society, *Pub.* (1916), pp. 51-61. William Markham, whose son later settled as a pioneer on the Genesee, was one of the members of this 1764 expedition.

<sup>45</sup> James E. Seaver, *Mary Jemison*, edited with commentary by Charles D. Vail (New York, 1925), pp. 58-62, 92-93, 369.

Even the Revolutionary War did not immediately affect the lower Genesee—although its outcome was to have far-reaching consequences for the area. The Senecas and the scattered Indian agents in this region were naturally loyal to the Crown.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, as the Revolution was, at least in part, a result of the conflict between the settlers' frontier and that of the Indian and fur trader, it did not require much urging to stir up a fight between the Indians and the settlers. Raiding parties, organized by the Tories and Indians at Niagara, occasionally stopped at John Butler's encampment near the Genesee falls en route to Kanadesaga (Geneva) or to the upper Genesee, from which points they could more easily ravage the frontier settlements of the Mohawk and Susquehanna Valleys.<sup>47</sup> In reply, the Sullivan-Clinton expedition marched into the Genesee Country in the summer of 1779, pillaging forty-two Indian villages and laying waste their orchards and cornfields.<sup>48</sup> The army turned back after burning the Genesee Castle near present Cuylerville, while many of the tribesmen flocked north during the hard winter that followed to seek refuge on the lower Genesee. Still more refugees gathered about the old French fort at Niagara until new villages could be built, notably on Buffalo and Tonawanda creeks.<sup>49</sup>

The final blow to the tribesmen came when the British negotiators at Paris, frankly desiring an early peace settlement, recognized that the Sullivan and the Clark expeditions together had established the claim of the United States to all the territory south of the Great Lakes.<sup>50</sup> The Canadians, unable to see the justice or necessity for this concession, refused either to communicate the terms to the Indians or to abandon the posts along the border.<sup>51</sup> For more than a decade they conspired to

<sup>46</sup> Alexander C. Flick, "The Loyalists," *History of the State of New York*, III, 327-343; Howard Swigget, *War Out of Niagara* (New York, 1933), pp. 3-58.

<sup>47</sup> Ernest Cruickshank, *The Story of Butler's Rangers* (Welland, Ontario, 1893), pp. 65-66; Swiggett, pp. 193-196; Albert H. Wright, "The Sullivan Expedition; Contemporary Newspaper Comments and Letters," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc., pp. 7-59.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander C. Flick, "The Sullivan-Clinton Campaign of 1779," *History of the State of New York*, IV, 187-216.

<sup>49</sup> Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester, 1851), p. 413.

<sup>50</sup> Definitive Treaty of Peace with Great Britain signed at Paris, Sept. 3, 1783, Hunter Miller, ed., *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America* (Washington, 1931), II, 152-153; Edgar W. McInnis, *The Unguarded Frontier* (New York, 1942), pp. 87-106. See also Alexander C. Flick, *The Sullivan-Clinton Campaign in 1779* (Albany, 1929), p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> A. C. McLaughlin, "The Western Posts and the British Debts," *American Historical Assoc., Annual Report for 1894* (Washington, 1895), pp. 413-444; C. W. Butterfield, *Washington-Irvine Correspondence* (Madison, Wis., 1882), pp. 192-193, 413-416; A. L. Burt, *The Old Province of Quebec* (Toronto and Minneapolis, 1933), pp. 329-356; S. F. Bemis, "Canada and the Peace Settlement of 1783," *Canadian Historical Review*, XIV, 1933, pp. 265-282; Samson Note Book, IV, 11-29. William Samson reviews the literature on this field and copies some unpublished letters supplied by E. Cruickshank.

maintain their hold on the Great Lakes basin and to monopolize its rich trade possibilities.<sup>52</sup> The Indians, suspicious of American intentions and disillusioned by British neglect of their interests, began to plot the formation of a great Indian confederation which they hoped might form a semi-independent buffer state, extending from the Iroquois territory west to the Mississippi.<sup>53</sup> But the young republic, negotiating separately with the Iroquois at Fort Stanwix in 1784<sup>54</sup> and with the other tribes as opportunity arose, gradually established its authority, thus preparing the way for the ultimate extinction of most of the Indian land titles.<sup>55</sup>

#### THE OCCUPATION OF THE GENESEE FRONTIER

The conquest of the Genesee frontier, as dramatic as any in the annals of the westward movement, was fortunately accomplished without further bloodshed. Conflicting state claims, rival groups of speculators, and impatient settlers contended with one another and with the retreating Indians, yet a semblance of order was maintained. Trade routes were opened; farms and village sites were cleared and occupied with such despatch that within a remarkably short period a stable and prosperous community emerged. Indeed, pioneer conditions were almost outgrown on the Genesee frontier before permanent settlers appeared in sufficient numbers on the lower Genesee to develop the resources of its falls.

Jurisdiction over the Genesee Country was claimed by both Massachusetts and New York, based in the former case on the Commonwealth Charter, and in the latter on an interpretation of the grant to the Duke of York, supported by a succession of Indian treaties and the logic of the geographic situation.<sup>56</sup> After the breakdown of an attempted mediation under the Articles of Confederation, the threat of a separate state movement,<sup>57</sup> similar to that in Vermont, prompted a negotiated settlement at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1786.<sup>58</sup> The agreement, as finally

<sup>52</sup> Douglas Brynmner, *Report on the Canadian Archives: 1888* (Ottawa, 1889), pp. 59-61; the same, 1890 (1891), pp. 97-175; Joseph Brant Letters in Henry O'Reilly Mementos, V, 77-82, MSS, N. Y. Hist. Soc.; D. G. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence: 1760-1850* (Toronto, 1937), pp. 131-141.

<sup>53</sup> *American State Papers, Indian Affairs* (Washington, D. C., 1832), I, 8-9. The Indian suspicions are well revealed in a number of letters to and from Gen. Philip Schuyler in 1783, Letters of Gen. Schuyler, III, No. 153, MSS.

<sup>54</sup> Franklin B. Hough, ed., *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs . . . in the State of New York* (Albany, 1861), pp. 32-66.

<sup>55</sup> Jay P. Kinney, *A Continent Lost—A Civilization Won* (Baltimore, 1937).

<sup>56</sup> Howard L. Osgood, "Title of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase," *Pub. of R. H. S.* (1892), pp. 19-34.

<sup>57</sup> This interesting though abortive movement awaits scholarly treatment. See the "Note Books" and MS collections of Samson, Osgood, Conover, and O'Reilly in the Rochester Historical Society.

<sup>58</sup> A copy of this treaty, on file at the University of Rochester, was made from the *Book of Deeds*, No. 22, located in the office of the Secretary of State of

ratified by both legislatures during the following year, recognized New York's jurisdiction but secured for Massachusetts the preëmption title to all the land west of a line that practically followed the course of Seneca Lake.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile, the rich character of the Genesee Country, as reported by the men of Sullivan's army and other early visitors,<sup>60</sup> had aroused the interest of avaricious speculators, as well as foot-loose pioneers, and the invasion was already under way.<sup>61</sup> New York's concern for the preservation of peace with the Indians and for the maintenance of its jurisdiction prompted the legislature in 1783 to create a Commission of Indian Affairs with sole authority to conduct or supervise all negotiations for the cession of Indian lands within the state.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, an influential group of New York speculators hastened to establish friendly relations with several of the tribes. In order to dodge the letter of the law, a 999-year lease was drawn and the signatures of forty-seven chiefs secured at Kanadesaga on November 30, 1787, granting a limited title to all the territory west of the old Line of Property of 1768.<sup>63</sup> In their haste to establish a claim, John Livingston and Dr. Caleb Benton, leaders of the New York Genesee Land Company, as this group was called, failed to secure the signatures of several of the leading sachems. The disgruntled chiefs, when discussing their predicament with Canadian friends at Niagara that winter, were persuaded to sign a new lease, predating it so as to cancel the Livingston lease, and granting the same territory on similar terms to the Niagara Genesee Land Company, as the John Butler and Samuel Street association came to be known.<sup>64</sup> Both of these speculations disregarded the

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New York. Thomas C. Amory, *Life of James Sullivan* (Boston, 1859), I, 164, quotes Sullivan's report on the Hartford negotiations. (Copied in Osgood, "Note Books" II, #14.)

<sup>59</sup> The issues raised by the two surveys of the Preëmption Line are most thoroughly discussed by George S. Conover, "Kanadesaga or Geneva," I, 326-347; II, 126-135. In this MS history of early Geneva, copies of which may be found in several leading libraries, Conover edits a valuable collection of Col. Hugh Maxwell letters, written during the first survey of 1788, as well as a long letter of Benjamin Ellicott, the second surveyor of 1792, describing the methods followed in making that final survey. Conover does not accept the Orsamus Turner (*Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 247) charge of fraud against the first surveyors.

<sup>60</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 130, 133-134; A. H. Wright, "Newspaper Accounts of the Sullivan Expedition," MS, pp. 202-204; George S. Conover, *Journals of the Military Expedition of . . . John Sullivan* (Auburn, 1887), pp. 59-61, 74-75, 142, 218.

<sup>61</sup> Conover, "Kanadesaga," I, 283-286, quotes from the Rev. Samuel Kirkland's diary for 1786 and 1787.

<sup>62</sup> Hough, *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, pp. 9-10n.

<sup>63</sup> Hough, pp. 119-128. See the lengthy footnote on these pages.

<sup>64</sup> E. A. Cruickshank, ed., *Records of Niagara* (Niagara Historical Society, No. 41, 1900), pp. 60-62; O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 126-130.

Massachusetts preëemption right, while apparently each group calculated on the possibility of establishing a separate state or province if the circumstances should prove favorable.<sup>65</sup>

But a third group of speculators, organized in New England by Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham, was destined to secure the coveted lands. Phelps and Gorham determined to acquire a legal title, and, after considerable difficulty, successfully persuaded the Massachusetts Legislature in May, 1788, to sell them the preëemption claim to the entire area for £300,000 in Commonwealth securities to be paid in three equal annual installments.<sup>66</sup> Oliver Phelps, as the active leader of the company, hastened west to negotiate with the tribes. Having already come to terms with Livingston and his associates, promising them a number of shares in return for aid in the negotiations, Phelps soon discovered that he must likewise conciliate the Niagara speculators.<sup>67</sup> When that had been accomplished and the chiefs finally assembled at Buffalo Creek early in July, new difficulties appeared.

The Indians were determined not to part with any of their lands west of the Genesee; indeed, only the argument that the earlier lease, if not superseded, would deprive them of the whole territory induced them to sell the eastern third of their land.<sup>68</sup> But the economic plight of the tribes proved an equally important factor. Annual payments, the chiefs apparently reasoned, would take the place of former benefits received for military services, while provision could be made for smiths to repair

<sup>65</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 106-110.

<sup>66</sup> Osgood MSS, II, No. 19, *Roch. Hist. Soc. Osgood* has copied extracts from the Massachusetts Senate Journals, vol. 8, for 1787-1791 relating to the negotiations over these western lands. See his "Title of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase," *Pub.*, R. H. S. (1892), pp. 34-36.

<sup>67</sup> Hough, *Proceedings of the Commissioners of Indian Affairs*, p. 449, and *passim*; Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 137-141; Rev. Samuel Kirkland, "Journal of 1788," MS. See the copy made by Conover, "Kanadesaga," I, 317-321, from the original in the State Library; Conover includes additional evidence of collusion, I, 315-317; see John Butler's attempted vindication, John Butler to Sir John Johnson, 1790, Colonial Office Records, "Canada" Q 46, pt. 2, quoted in Blake McKelvey, "Historic Aspects of the Phelps and Gorham Treaty of July 4-8, 1788," *Rochester History*, I, No. 1, pp. 21-22. Samuel Street Correspondence, MSS, University of Rochester, starting with Oct. 20, 1788-Aug. 22, 1789, affords ample evidence of close collaboration, at least after the event. An important letter of March 10, 1789, confesses that Street has been unable to collect funds from his Niagara associates for the payments due on his shares because of fear of losing favor with the Canadian authorities. This pressure later prompted Butler's attempted vindication and called forth the statement by William Johnston, the interpreter, whose inability to recall some of the details reveals that the statement probably was not prepared until just before its submission in 1790. The desire to present a clean record may have caused Butler and Johnston to forget the activities of the Niagara Genesee Land Company in which Butler at least was interested. See Johnston's statement in Cruickshank, *Records of Niagara*, pp. 60-64.

<sup>68</sup> Hough, pp. 160-171.

their arms and utensils; further, it would be very agreeable to have a sawmill to cut boards for better houses and a gristmill to relieve them of much labor and stimulate larger crops.<sup>69</sup> Oliver Phelps eagerly agreed to build mills for their use in return for an additional mill plot, generously laid out twelve by twenty-four miles in size, on the west side of the river at the falls. Thus, when the treaty was completed, the site of Rochester—indeed practically the whole of Monroe County—was included in the 2,600,000-acre cession, and the Indians were to receive as their payment £2,100 in New York currency and £200 annually forever—not forgetting the mills to be erected for their convenience at the Genesee falls.<sup>70</sup>

&lt;

With the title assured, Oliver Phelps hastened back to his temporary headquarters near the Indian village of Kanadesaga. There the task of surveying the tract and dividing it into townships was pushed forward, and the northern shore of Canandaigua Lake was chosen as the site for the principal village. Plans for roads to the east, generally following the main Indian trails, initiated the work of chopping out the essential highways.<sup>71</sup> The problem of dividing the townships among the associated speculators and of collecting funds for the first payment to Massachusetts called Phelps back east, but before departing he delegated the task of building the mills at the Genesee falls to Ebenezer Allan, granting him a hundred-acre lot on the west bank at the upper fall for the job.<sup>72</sup>

Allan was an energetic and colorful representative of the frontier. Despite earlier escapades as a Tory ranger during the last years of the Revolution, Allan's trading activities among the Indians and his marriage to the Seneca lass, Sally, had brought him the nickname "Indian," while his efforts to assist the States in establishing peace with the Indians had won the confidence of several leading Americans. Shortly before Phelps's arrival, Allan had squatted on the rich bottom lands west of the Genesee near the site of Scottsville, where he was already improving a small farm, having added Lucy Chapman, his first white wife, to a growing household which numbered two daughters by Sally, his own sister and her husband, Christopher Dugan, as well as Lucy's parents

<sup>69</sup> *A Brief Sketch of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends to . . . Indians of the State of New York* (Philadelphia, 1879), p. 7. Cornplanter, in a letter of 1791 to the Philadelphia Friends, said in part: "Brothers: The Seneca Nation see that the Great Spirit intends they should not continue to live by hunting. They look around on every side and enquire, 'Who is it that shall teach them. . . .'"

<sup>70</sup> McKelvey, "Historic Aspects of the Phelps and Gorham Treaty," pp. 17-18, quotes the deed and the appended bond of Oliver Phelps.

<sup>71</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 163-164; Conover, "Kanadesaga," II, 450-452.

<sup>72</sup> Morley B. Turpin, "Ebenezer Allan in the Genesee Country," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 327, quotes the original articles of agreement.

and married sister. A strong personality assured Allan the leadership over this the most considerable settlement in the Genesee Valley in 1788, while his many associations with the Indians made him a fit choice for the pioneer miller at the falls.<sup>73</sup>

Allan knew the Genesee Country well enough to realize the advantages of the proposed mill site. The promise of growing settlements to the southeast and the expected trade with the Indians sharpened his enthusiasm for the venture. In the spring of 1789, between planting and harvest, time was found to ride down to the falls and plow out a primitive raceway. A half-acre lot in the center of present downtown Rochester was cleared of trees, and by early summer a crude sawmill stood ready to cut the lumber for a more substantial gristmill, though it was the middle of November before fourteen able-bodied white men could be assembled to raise the heavy timbers. Tradition reports that a trading vessel made a timely visit to the mouth of the Genesee, unloading a keg of rum to add zest to the occasion. Allan sold his farm that fall for the fair price of \$2.50 an acre, thus securing funds for the new enterprise, and in the spring of 1790 moved with his growing family, already including Lucy's baby son, Seneca, down to the mills at the falls.<sup>74</sup>

Difficulties began to appear soon after Allan took his stand at the extreme outpost of the Genesee frontier. Aside from a small Indian settlement overlooking Irondequoit Bay, the nearest neighbors in 1790 were Israel and Simon Stone at the site of Pittsford, John Lusk at Irondequoit Landing, the Shaeffers on Allan's old farm at Scottsville, and possibly the Tory trader, William Walker, at the mouth of the river.<sup>75</sup> Several miles further south settlers were arriving in greater numbers, though they seldom visited the mills at the falls.<sup>76</sup> Prospects for trade with the Indians failed to develop, partly because of the dire poverty of the tribesmen, but chiefly because the great distance separating their village from the falls had made this aspect of the enterprise

<sup>73</sup> Turpin, "Ebenezer Allan," pp. 313-338. Mr. Turpin has reassessed Rochester's much abused pioneer. Earlier judgments by Turner (*Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 405-406), Seaver (*Mary Jemison*, pp. 79-92), Jane Marsh Parker (*Rochester, A Story Historical*, Rochester, 1884, pp. 47-50), and Harris (in Peck, *Semi-Centennial History*, pp. 76-80) emphasized Allan's failure to conform to the Victorian code of the nineteenth century. It is worth noting that all these writers used the stories dug up in 1821 when Seneca Allan's claim against the property of the 100-acre tract was stimulating a search for evidence to disprove Seneca's mother's dower claims! See Troup, Letter Book No. 7, MS, pp. 8-9, 189-190, 195-198, 209-215, 265-267, 316-317, 477, 506; also Rochester Letters, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>74</sup> Turpin, "Ebenezer Allan," pp. 325, 327-328; Blake McKelvey, "Indian Allan's Mills," *Rochester History*, I, No. 4, 2-8.

<sup>75</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 410, 413-414n; O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 243-245.

<sup>76</sup> "Journal of William Berczy," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XX, 183-184, 212, 214.

illusory from the start. All hope of correcting the situation by nurturing Indian agricultural communities was meanwhile held in abeyance by the preoccupation of the chiefs at numerous council fires where the proposed Indian confederation was under discussion.<sup>77</sup> While the pioneer corn-cracker at the falls stood idle, Allan turned again to trading expeditions up the Genesee and down the Susquehanna.<sup>78</sup> In Philadelphia he renewed a business acquaintance with Robert Morris and ultimately found there a purchaser for his mill tract.<sup>79</sup>

A stream of settlers from New England was beginning to flow toward the Genesee Country, though not in numbers sufficient to support the vast speculation of Phelps and Gorham. Their land office, opened at Canandaigua, the first in the country to be established in the midst of the territory to be developed, provided articles of sale in lieu of deeds to those unable to make more than a small down payment on the lands.<sup>80</sup> The first survey, when completed, marked off 103 townships in rectangular plots, some thirty of which were sold or contracted for as units, while most of the rest were allotted to the company associates, although few of these Yankee speculators were able to make the payments necessary to retain their lands.

Indeed, Phelps and Gorham, with their first payment to Massachusetts due in January, 1789, had already been forced to surrender their claim to the territory west of the lands ceded by the Indians and to ask for an adjustment of their remaining obligations. The depreciated state securities in which they had contracted for payment had jumped in value, partly because of Hamilton's fiscal policy, and the company which had bought on the margin, hoping to meet its obligations from the return on sales at advanced prices, was forced to liquidate all unassigned assets. Accordingly, in August, 1790, the unsold portion of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase was conveyed to Robert Morris of Philadelphia for approximately \$150,000.<sup>81</sup> Financially, the New England speculators just about broke even, but Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham, who had reserved the Canandaigua township and other tracts for themselves, and several of the associates (notably the Wadsworth brothers, James and William), who had been able to make payments on their lands, emerged with valuable estates.<sup>82</sup>

Robert Morris, meanwhile, was so extensively involved in land

<sup>77</sup> *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 1-643, deals with negotiations with the Indians from 1789 to 1800.

<sup>78</sup> Turpin, "Ebenezer Allan," pp. 329-333.

<sup>79</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 243. Morris consulted Allan's opinion on the value of the Genesee Country before making his purchase of Phelps and Gorham.

<sup>80</sup> Conover, "Kanadesaga," II, 100-101, 110-112.

<sup>81</sup> Osgood, "Title of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase," pp. 42-44.

<sup>82</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 163-240, 324-344.



speculations in all parts of the country that his Genesee purchase appeared but a minor venture. Almost before he became aware of its value, his agent in England disposed of the entire property for an even third of a million dollars—a quick profit of 100 per cent on the investment.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, Sir William Pulteney and his English associates could well afford to pay twenty-six cents an acre for land in the Genesee Country, even though many of the choice northern townships had already been staked out by the Phelps and Gorham interests. The Pulteney Estate, as it was henceforth called, was placed under the management of Captain Charles Williamson, a naturalized Scot, who quickly developed unusual skill as a land promoter, distinguishing himself and his backers from the majority of speculators who as land brokers reaped their profits without taking a constructive part in developing their territories.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed the possibilities of the vast estate appealed to Williamson's bold imagination. When a second survey revealed that the site of Geneva and the major part of Sodus Bay lay within the boundaries of the tract, villages were quickly planned for these two locations. But Williamson, operating chiefly from populous Philadelphia and Baltimore, rather than from Boston, saw the Susquehanna, not the Mohawk, as the proper gateway to the Genesee Country. Before the end of 1793, he had planted two towns on this southern trade route: Bath on the Conhocton near the head of rafting possibilities down that branch of the Susquehanna, and Williamsburg at the junction of Canaseraga Creek with the Genesee. A road was opened through the mountains almost due north from the site of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, to Williamsburg, thus greatly shortening the overland route to market. Groups of immigrants were brought in and provided with cabins and stock. Gristmills, taverns, and schools were built with such a generous use of the funds of his English backers that Williamson was displaced

<sup>83</sup> The Pulteney Estate, as the area was later known, was not Robert Morris' only speculation in Western New York. For a brief account of his many interests here, see Conover, "Kanasasaga," II, 119-123. "The Narrative of Thomas Morris," *Historical Magazine* (Second Series, 1869), V, 370-384, and Henry O'Reilly's editorial notes, *ibid.*, pp. 368-388, afford a good idea of the activities of Thomas in negotiating with the Indians and conducting varied land speculations for his father and himself. In the Osgood MSS; Phelps and Gorham Papers, MSS, Univ. Roch.; Morris Letters in the Henry O'Reilly Collection, MSS, N. Y. Hist. Soc.; and Robert Morris Papers, N. Y. Public Library, are materials available for a more careful study of this subject than has yet appeared. See however, Charles F. Milliken, "Thomas Morris," *R. H. S., Pub.*, VII, 41-53.

<sup>84</sup> Helen Cowan, "Charles Williamson: Genesee Promoter: Friend of Anglo-American Rapprochement," *R. H. S., Pub.*, vol. XIX, *passim*; Osgood, "Title of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase," pp. 44-51, traces the estate transactions and notes the succession of agencies. A good brief bibliography is appended to this article. Paul D. Evans, "The Pulteney Purchase," *N. Y. State Hist. Assoc., Proceedings*, XX, 83-104.

from his agency in 1801. Nevertheless, within a brief decade this colorful Scot had made the Genesee Country one of the most popular goals for westward migrating Americans.<sup>85</sup>

#### PIONEER WAYS PARTIALLY OUTGROWN

Although events conspired to retard its development, the lower Genesee was not entirely neglected during this period. Early in 1791, Ebenezer Allan, having found the mill seat too quiet for his energetic temperament, left it in charge of his brother-in-law, Christopher Dugan, until the next year, when the property was conveyed to Benjamin Barton, a Philadelphia associate of Robert Morris.<sup>86</sup> In the brief interval between their purchase of the unsold portion of the Phelps and Gorham estate and the arrival of advice from England concerning its sale, the Morris associates devised plans for a trading town on the east bank of the Genesee at the lower falls. A plat was drawn for a town named after ancient Athens,<sup>87</sup> but this visionary scheme was soon forgotten, and even Allan's mills across the river were abandoned late in 1794, when the prospects for the development of the area reached their lowest ebb.

Several factors operated to postpone the planting of permanent settlements on the lower Genesee. The possibility of an Indian uprising continued to threaten the Genesee frontier until news arrived of Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers, and the grievances of the Iroquois were not adjusted until the Pickering Treaty was signed at Canandaigua on November 11, 1794.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor John G. Simcoe, zealously defending the claims of Upper Canada merchants to complete domination over the fur trade, refused to permit American boats on Lake Ontario, thus effectively blighting trade prospects on the lower Genesee.<sup>89</sup> Though Jay's Treaty set aside that policy in 1794, the posts at Oswego and Niagara were not surrendered until August, 1796.<sup>90</sup>

The development of a Genesee trading port was then quickly under-

<sup>85</sup> Helen Cowan, "Charles Williamson," pp. 145-176, 227-250.

<sup>86</sup> Copy of a deed from Allan to Barton, Mar. 21, 1792, Henry O'Reilly Doc., No. 2492, Rochester Hist. Soc. Allan's price was £500 in New York currency, about \$15 an acre, including improvements. Allan, disappointed in land and trade ventures on the upper Genesee, finally moved on to make a fresh start in Canada in 1794. See Turpin, "Ebenezer Allan," pp. 330-338; Fred C. Hamil, "Ebenezer Allan in Canada," Ontario Historical Society, *Papers and Records*, XXXVI, 83-93.

<sup>87</sup> See the photostat copy of the town plat in Rochester Hist. Soc. The original was found attached to the MS deed in the County Clerk's Office in Bath, New York. See also Samuel Street to Oliver Phelps, March 10 and 23, 1789, Street Correspondence, Univ. Rochester.

<sup>88</sup> Report of the Treaty with the Six Nations at Canandaigua, 1794, Timothy Pickering Papers, No. 60: 198-241, MSS, Mass. Hist. Soc.; Chapin Correspondence in Henry O'Reilly Western Mementos, N. Y. Hist. Soc., X, 72, 76, 88, 92; Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 167.

<sup>89</sup> Turner, pp. 315-324; E. A. Cruickshank, ed., *Correspondence of Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe* (Ontario Hist. Soc., Toronto, 1924), III, 20; V, 65.

<sup>90</sup> Samson Note Book, IV, 23-27, assembles evidence concerning this surrender.

taken. Gideon King, Zadock Granger, and several families from Suffield, Connecticut, located on the west bank at the lower falls in the winter of 1796-97. At least while the surveyors were busy laying out the tract, a bustling activity characterized King's Landing. Town lots were marked off, several log houses erected, a dock and a sailing vessel built. Shipments of potash in exchange for salt from Oswego gave promise of a bright commercial future for Fall Town, as the landing was sometimes called.<sup>91</sup> A rival trading center, known as Tryon Town, appeared a few miles east at the old Indian landing on Irondequoit Bay,<sup>92</sup> while a new miller, Josiah Fish, was stationed at the upper falls by Charles Williamson who had by this time acquired title to Allan's hundred-acre tract.<sup>93</sup>

As the Genesee falls acquired a reputation for natural beauty, occasional travelers en route to Niagara turned aside to view them. One early visitor, the Comte de Colbert Maulevrier, was not too favorably impressed in 1798 by the accommodations at the mill, where he was forced to share a room with seven others, "both men and women, and five or six in the adjoining room all sleeping close together in feather beds on the floor." The hospitable miller had, it seems, given shelter to several families on their way to Canada who were awaiting the arrival of a schooner which already maintained frequent communications between York (Toronto) and the Genesee. Colbert de Maulevrier, after visiting the several falls, enjoyed a drink of grog at King's Landing "where the boats have unloaded for the last two years," but observed that "sickness carried off five of the new settlers and the news of their deaths kept several families from coming here from Connecticut."<sup>94</sup>

In 1800 the English traveler, John Maude, found the sawmill in ruins and the gristmill "almost entirely neglected." The one evidence of local enterprise that impressed Maude was the bridge over Deep Hollow gully, for the erection of which Gideon King and Josiah Fish had "collected all the men in the neighborhood, to the number of one hundred, and in two days at the expense of \$475 the bridge was completed," thus opening the road on the west bank from the mills to the landing. But Maude was surprised to find Simon King, "the only respectable

<sup>91</sup> [Charles Williamson], *Description of the Genesee County, Its Rapidly Progressive Population and Improvements: In a Series of Letters From a Gentleman to His Friend* (Albany, 1798); R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 335-346.

<sup>92</sup> A. Emerson Babcock, "The City of Tryon and Vicinity," R. H. S., *Pub.*, I, 112-149.

<sup>93</sup> Charles Sholl to Charles Williamson, Sept. 4, 1797, Osgood MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Peter Sheffer's testimony concerning the Allan mill, Mar. 24, 1845, MS, Rochester Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>94</sup> Comte de Colbert Maulevrier, *Voyage dans l'Interieur des Etats-Unis et au Canada*, Gilbert Chinard, ed. (Baltimore, 1935), pp. 44-45; see R. W. G. Vail's translation of the local portion, R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 159-165.

settler in this Township" and the proprietor of 3000 acres, content to live in an "indifferent log-house."<sup>95</sup>



The lower Genesee thus failed to keep pace with developments elsewhere in the Genesee Country, to which as a whole the early travelers could scarcely give sufficient praise.<sup>96</sup> The fearful pall of the "Genesee fever" which hung over the region in the early nineties began to lift as the cleared fields were extended, the rich bottom lands drained, and more substantial houses provided.<sup>97</sup> The interior settlements had not been seriously affected by either the Canadian or the Indian threats; in fact, land speculators there expressed concern lest the adjustment of these difficulties and the opening of new regions to the west and in Canada might depress the demand for Genesee lands.<sup>98</sup> A Western Inland Lock Navigation Company was chartered in 1792 to improve and join the natural water routes provided by the Mohawk and Finger Lakes rivers. Boats started to push their way slowly along this primitive canal late in 1795, although the construction work was not completed until 1802.<sup>99</sup> By that date improvements in the Susquehanna route were already in progress,<sup>100</sup> while the old Genesee Road was being rebuilt by the Seneca Turnpike Company.<sup>101</sup> In spite of the great difficulties

<sup>95</sup> Oliver Phelps to Justin Ely, Sept. 9, 1797, Phelps and Gorham Papers, photostats at Univ. Rochester; John Maude, *Visit to the Falls of Niagara in 1800* (London, 1826), pp. 106, 109, 113. After the death of Gideon King and several others in 1798, his wife, Ruth, returned to Connecticut with her two younger boys, but other members of the settlement carried on at the landing until after Simon King's death in 1805 when several of them moved to farms along the Ridge.

<sup>96</sup> "Foreign Travelers' Notes on Rochester and the Genesee Country before 1840," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, Part I.

<sup>97</sup> Edward G. Ludlow, *Observations on the Lake Fevers and Other Diseases of the Genesee Country in the State of New York* (New York, 1823); O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 91-104, quotes Ludlow and other early authorities at length. See also R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 346-347.

<sup>98</sup> Robert Troup to Charles Williamson, Nov. 6, 1794, Osgood MSS, No. 303, Roch. Hist. Soc. See also Paul D. Evans, "Holland Land Company," Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, XXVIII, 227.

<sup>99</sup> Conover, "Kanadesaga," III, 730-737; "The First Report of the Director and Engineer of the Inland Lock Navigation Co." (1796), Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, II, 157-180; J. S. Grant, "Early Modes of Travel and Transportation," Cayuga Hist. Soc., *Collections*, VII (Auburn, 1889), 91-111.

<sup>100</sup> D. T. Blake to Charles Williamson, Baltimore, July 28, Aug. 14, 1802, Osgood MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>101</sup> Benjamin DeWitt, "A Sketch of the Turnpike Roads in the State of New York," *Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge* (1807), II, 190-204. DeWitt notes that turnpike roads already (1806) stretch across the state from the Massachusetts line through Albany and Utica to "Canandaque," a distance of 234 miles, and as soon as the Ontario and Genesee Turnpike Co., capitalized at \$175,000, completes its road to Black Rock, the state will be crossed by a road 324 miles in length! See also, O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 170-175.

which faced the boatmen and wagoners, trade was flowing in steadily increasing volume over the eastern<sup>102</sup> and southern routes to the neglect of the lower Genesee. The markets were in the East, and thither likewise went the payments on the land and for the equipment and supplies which could not be provided on the frontier.

Travelers marveled not only at the number of heavy sleighs of produce headed eastward,<sup>103</sup> but also at the almost unending succession of vehicles of all sorts with which the settlers were moving west.<sup>104</sup> The migration gained momentum as the nineteenth century dawned. The 1,075 persons accredited to the Genesee Country in 1790 increased to 17,006 by 1800, and to 75,160 by 1810.<sup>105</sup> Before the last date six counties were organized, court houses and jails erected in Canandaigua, Bath, and Batavia, while in addition to these towns a dozen other villages developed sufficient community life to support churches, schools, and even libraries,<sup>106</sup> not to mention the taverns and stores which vied for the trade of travelers and farmers alike.<sup>107</sup> By 1810 there were five village papers printed west of Lake Seneca, a slight foretaste of the invasion of country printers soon to occur.<sup>108</sup> A few "melancholy facts" were observed amidst the general progress by one of the older editors, who lamented "that political zeal has recently usurped the empire of patriotism, and the acquisition of property [has] become almost the sole object of pursuit."<sup>109</sup>

It required a frequent rallying of Zion's forces to battle these trends, as well as to overcome many crude pioneer habits. When the Reverend John B. Hudson, a Methodist lay preacher, started his missionary labors on the New York frontier in 1804, he found the southern Genesee pioneers still living for the most part in log houses covered with bark roofs. He reported "whiskey and Sabbath desecration . . . notoriously

<sup>102</sup> W. G. Mayer, "The History of Transportation in the Mohawk Valley," N. Y. State Hist. Assoc., *Proceedings*, XIV (1915), 214-230.

<sup>103</sup> Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, VI, 185.

<sup>104</sup> Col. William A. Bird, "Early Transportation Between Albany and Buffalo," MS, Buffalo Hist. Soc.

<sup>105</sup> N. Y. State *Census* (1855). Compiled from tables on p. xxxiv. The figures represent the successive population for the entire area west of the Preëemption Line, though by 1810 the western portion was not always considered a part of the Genesee Country.

<sup>106</sup> Blake McKelvey, "Early Library Development In and Around Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVI, 12-15.

<sup>107</sup> Augustus Porter, "Narrative of the Early Years," Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, VII, 277-322; Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, passim*; Blake McKelvey, "On the Educational Frontier," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 3-8.

<sup>108</sup> Milton W. Hamilton, *The Country Printer, New York State, 1785-1830* (New York, 1936), pp. 54, 88, 258, 301. See especially the map on p. 87. See also William H. Samson, "Studies in Local History," *Rochester Post-Express* (1907-1908), No. V. (Scrapbook in Roch. Hist. Soc.)

<sup>109</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 26, 1809.

prevalent" among the inhabitants, who were "certainly not noted for morality, and still less so in regard to religion."<sup>110</sup> Deists and infidels appeared to surround him, though he may have exaggerated his difficulties, for the labors of fellow Methodists had made some headway around the Finger Lakes, where their first camp meeting gathered five thousand persons on the lake shore near Geneva in 1805. In 1810, when the Genesee conference was formed, four extended circuits were organized to serve the scattered Methodists of the Genesee Country.<sup>111</sup>

Several other denominational groups had likewise shouldered the task of developing religious traditions along the Genesee. Episcopal missionaries had visited the region as early as 1797, and at least one of their pastors was continuously in residence after 1801, although an organized effort to establish Episcopal churches did not occur until 1811.<sup>112</sup> The Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists were more successful. The first, able to organize a Presbytery at Geneva in 1805, numbered already three charges west of Seneca Lake, to which two others were soon added.<sup>113</sup> When the Baptist missionary, John Colby, passed through the northern portion of the Genesee Country in 1810, he found Congregational and Baptist churches in almost every village,<sup>114</sup> which was scarcely surprising in view of the predominantly New England origin of these settlers.<sup>115</sup> A brick meeting house appeared at Bloomfield in 1809,<sup>116</sup> and by this date travelers were describing several of the villages as "very pretty" or "handsome," marvelling at the number of their elegant frame houses and quaint cottages, sparkling under fresh coats of white paint.<sup>117</sup>

By the end of the decade Canandaigua, Geneva, and Buffalo each

<sup>110</sup> [J. B. Hudson], *Narrative of the Christian Experience, Travels and Labors of John B. Hudson* (Rochester, 1838), pp. 102-106, 127.

<sup>111</sup> [Hudson], *Narrative of the Christian Experience*, pp. 133-134, 143-144; Francis Asbury, *Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury* (New York, 1821), III, 225-226, 292-293; F. G. Hibbard, *History of the East Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1887), pp. 16-19.

<sup>112</sup> *Fifty Years: Semi-Centennial Commemoration of the Diocese of Western New York* (Buffalo, 1888), pp. 17, 18-19.

<sup>113</sup> James H. Hotchkiss, *A History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York and of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Presbyterian Church in That Section* (New York, 1848), pp. 79-80.

<sup>114</sup> [John Colby], *The Life, Experience and Travels of John Colby, Preacher of the Gospel* (Rochester, 1827), pp. 92-93.

<sup>115</sup> James H. Dill, *Congregationalism in Western New York* (Rochester, 1859), pp. 1-5.

<sup>116</sup> T[homas] C[oo]per, *A Ride to Niagara in 1809* (Rochester, 1915), p. 14.

<sup>117</sup> John Melish, *Travels in the United States of America in the Years 1806, and 1807, and 1809, 1810, and 1811* (Philadelphia, 1812), p. 519; Duke de la Rochefoucault Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London, 1800), I, 264; Comte de Colbert Maulevrier, p. 43.

boasted upwards of one hundred houses,<sup>118</sup> and numerous smaller hamlets were scattered along the stage road<sup>119</sup> between them or southward toward Geneseo and Bath. Several Indian settlements remained in the area, possibly the most frequently visited being that at Canawaugus, overlooking the Genesee River where the state road crossed west of Avon.<sup>120</sup> But the settlers were beginning to feel themselves to be a part of an established community. Already they were represented by seven delegates in the assembly at Albany and one in Congress. In spite of their New England origin, or because such a large portion of the settlers had come from the Jeffersonian districts of western Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Vermont,<sup>121</sup> the political sentiments of the area generally favored the Jeffersonians, although Canandaigua, Bloomfield, and a few other towns were staunchly Federalist.<sup>122</sup> Signs of the crude frontier days were disappearing from the wide swath cut in the forest by the settlers as they advanced across the state, and the time had at last arrived for a permanent advance into the lower Genesee.

<sup>118</sup> Horatio G. Spafford, *Gazetteer of the State of New-York* (Albany, 1813), pp. 141, 152, 200. See also Robert Munro, "A Description of the Genesee Country [in 1804]," O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of New York*, II, 679-691.

<sup>119</sup> In 1807, John Metcalf was licensed to operate a stage between Canandaigua and Buffalo. N. Y. Assembly *Journal* (1819), p. 106.

<sup>120</sup> Duke de la Rochefoucault Liancourt, I, 290-291; C[ooper], *Ride to Niagara*, p. 14; Frances Wright, *Views of Society and Manners in America by an English-woman* (New York, 1821), pp. 147-159.

<sup>121</sup> William W. Campbell, ed., *The Life and Writings of DeWitt Clinton* (New York, 1849), pp. 103, 108, 110, 111.

<sup>122</sup> Lockwood R. Doty, *History of Livingston County* (Jackson, Mich., 1905), pp. 276, 280; *Ontario Repository*, May 10, 1803, May 9, 1809; John T. Horton, *James Kent: 1763-1847* (New York, 1939), pp. 130-133.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LOWER GENESEE SETTLEMENTS

1808-1815

THE RAPID GROWTH of the Genesee frontier, although previously channeled in other directions, was destined to play a vital role in developments at the falls. The flow of surplus produce over the eastern and southern trade routes was suddenly checked when the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts stopped exports and glutted the Atlantic markets after 1808. As the laws were not rigidly enforced against trade with Canada, the produce of the Genesee soon found a new outlet down the river and over the lake to the north.<sup>1</sup> The advanced stage of the interior settlements thus provided attractive commercial opportunities for a trading town on the lower Genesee. Several enterprising villages quickly appeared, though the contest for priority which ensued was not to be terminated until the hazards of a frontier war and the charting of a new trade artery gave the advantage to Rochester.

#### A BRIDGEHEAD, A MILL TOWN, OR A LAKE PORT

Unlike many pioneer villages in the valley, born of the farsighted plans of paternal promoters, Rochester was a product of the functional relationship between its choice site and the trade requirements of the surrounding settlements. The lower Genesee did attract several efforts, by determined pioneers who threw their best energies into the task of building the much desired trading port, yet circumstances intervened to check these ventures. Meanwhile, the growth of neighboring settlements, the opening of new roads, the building of a bridge at the falls, and the persistent increase in the volume of exports finally set the stage by 1812 for the appearance of a combined milling and trading town on Allan's original mill lot. Fortunately a wise proprietor, able to harmonize the conflicting interests on the lower Genesee, arrived in time to encourage and direct the eager settlers who rushed in to take their stand at the falls.

<sup>1</sup> A comparable stream of American settlers was attracted by a liberal land policy into Upper Canada, not closed to immigrants from the States until 1815. Marcus L. Hansen, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* (New Haven, 1940), pp. 89-90, 95-100. See also note 17, below.



The retarded development of the lower Genesee—as compared with many parts of western New York in the early 1800's—was matched by the slow growth of settlements in the adjacent territory. The area of present Monroe County contained less than 100 scattered pioneers and surveyors in 1790,<sup>2</sup> numbered 1192 settlers in 1800, and boasted only 4683, or scarcely seven per square mile, in 1810.<sup>3</sup> The majority of these were located in the southeastern portion where they formed the town of Northfield in 1794, renaming it Boyle in 1808; but a goodly number had already settled west of the river in the town of Northampton, organized in 1797 and renamed Gates after its southern and western portions had been cut off in 1808.<sup>4</sup> These Monroe County pioneers were widely and sparsely scattered, yet sure evidence of their resolve to subdue the surrounding forest and establish permanent communities was afforded by the roads they were opening and the ten or more schools already provided for the children of the area by 1810.<sup>5</sup>

The vital relation between these neighboring settlements and the impending developments at the falls appeared with the agitation for a bridge across the lower Genesee. It was in 1807 that Calvin Freeman, a pioneer settler on the Ridge twenty miles west of the river, petitioned for a bridge at the falls and a state road along the Ridge westward from the Genesee to Lewiston. Though he had labored with other pioneers, four years before, in building the bridge where the old state road crossed the river at Avon, few supporters for the new route could now be found in LeRoy, Batavia, Buffalo, or Black Rock, all located on that first highway. Freeman, however, collected many signatures at Lewiston and in the log cabins scattered along the trail following the Ridge from that place to the Genesee.<sup>6</sup> Settlers east of the river, notably those at Pittsford and Perinton, drafted similar petitions and sent Enos Stone to Albany to press the proposal before the legislature. It required all the weight they could muster to counteract the arguments of their southern neighbors, who described the region as “a God-forsaken place! inhabited by muskrats, visited only by straggling trappers, through

<sup>2</sup> James L. Barton, *Early Reminiscences of Western New York* (Buffalo, 1848), p. 45. The census figures of 1790 are here broken down and assigned to the townships as of 1820. It is impossible to get an accurate figure for the Monroe County area, but only 66 were located definitely within this area, while most of the 166 listed in the townships straddling the southern boundary were doubtless living well south of the line.

<sup>3</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1855), p. xxiv. Monroe County had approximately 144 per square mile in 1855 at the close of its water-power era, and 654 in 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Albert H. Wright, “Old Northampton in Western New York,” *R. H. S., Pub.*, VII, 287-288, 303-306, 315; *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 1, 1811.

<sup>5</sup> Blake McKelvey, “On the Educational Frontier,” *R. H. S., Pub.*, XVII, 5-6; Wright, “Old Northampton,” pp. 337-340, 346-353.

<sup>6</sup> Pioneer Association Record Book, MS, p. 149, Roch. Hist. Soc., letter from Calvin Freeman in newspaper clipping of Oct. 12, 1869.

which neither man nor beast could gallop without fear of starvation or fever and ague!"<sup>7</sup> Finally the bridge bill passed, directing Ontario and Genesee Counties to raise \$12,000 for the purpose, and work started in 1810 on a wooden bridge at the point where Main Street crosses today.

Roads as well as bridges were needed if the area's advantages were to be developed. The west river road, opened by the early pioneers from Scottsville north to King's Landing during the nineties, was a round-about approach, emphasizing the importance of the old state road which by-passed the lower Genesee, and a new east-west highway seemed a major necessity. Apparently it was in 1805 that the pathmasters of the old town of Northfield laid out a new route from their chief settlement (Pittsford) to the old Indian Landing trail and northwestward to the fording place over the Genesee. But not until the state took over this road in 1812 was the marshy stretch between Culver's and the new bridge made passable for vehicles.<sup>8</sup>

With the road and bridge assured, Enos Stone, a relative of several of the founders of Pittsford, moved with his wife and infant son into a one-room shanty on the east bank of the river overlooking the ford, where he commenced to clear the land acquired by his father from Oliver Phelps at 44 cents an acre two decades before.<sup>9</sup> Isaac W. Stone, arriving with his wife and five children in the same year, 1810, purchased a five-acre lot overlooking the site of the proposed bridge and erected a crude tavern to accommodate the workmen and chance visitors.<sup>10</sup>



But the lower Genesee was not designated for a simple bridgehead, nor for an overnight tavern-town, and its more vigorous early settlements sprang from the growing river trade. Unfortunately (in the eyes of pioneer traders) the succession of falls and rapids seriously obstructed the river as a commercial route, compelling a long portage from the

<sup>7</sup> Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 247-249; *Ontario Repository*, May 23, 1809.

<sup>8</sup> Northfield Town Records, Supervisors' Meetings, MSS in Pittsford, N. Y., Town Hall; Orsamus Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 427-429; Campbell, *DeWitt Clinton*, p. 112; Edwin Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," Scrapbook, pp. 1-2, Roch. Hist. Soc. See also Col. Nathaniel Rochester's Memorial to the Legislature, 1812, MS in Canandaigua, in which it appears that the original road to the bridge may have followed the direct route of Monroe Avenue, changed before it was opened to the East Avenue route by a group who desired to locate the bridge just above the main falls, a move Col. Rochester stopped only after the road was partly opened, thus explaining the indirect approach to the bridge.

<sup>9</sup> "Reminiscences of Enos Stone," in Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 424-425, 584; John Kelsey, *The Lives and Reminiscences of the Pioneers of Rochester and Western New York* (Rochester, 1854), pp. 7-9.

<sup>10</sup> Turner, p. 585; Annah B. Yates, "Early Rochester Families," No. LIV, *Rochester Post-Express*, July 22, 1911.

upper rapids six miles over a rough road to King's Landing or four miles further to the river's mouth.<sup>11</sup> The wide bow in the river joined with the steep right bank at the lower falls to favor the western side as a portage route, while the advantage of a shorter carry from the rapids east to the Irondequoit landing, where John Tryon's store still enjoyed a moderate trade,<sup>12</sup> was offset by the sand bar which already restrained lake vessels from entering the bay. Thus it was on the west bank of the river that the trading settlements developed, though a peculiar combination of circumstances made it difficult to determine the most favorable site for the future town.

While the landing below the lower falls doubtless offered great advantages, the high mortality among the Kings and the Grangers who struggled for almost a decade to establish Fall Town turned newcomers to rival sites,<sup>13</sup> notably to the dry west bank at the mouth of the river. William Hinchey, with a son and seven daughters, had located there in the winter of 1792, building a log house which occasionally afforded shelter to travelers;<sup>14</sup> but it was in 1805, when Samuel Latta arrived as first customs agent for the Port of the Genesee and land agent for the Pulteney Estate properties in the area, that trade prospects brightened. A wharf was constructed, a store and additional cabins appeared, and fifty town lots were laid out and priced at ten dollars each in order to attract settlers to the village named Charlotte.<sup>15</sup>

Though the customs receipts for 1805 totalled only \$22.50, a rapid increase occurred when the Embargo shunted trade down the Genesee. Shipments, valued at \$30,000 in 1806, jumped by 1808 to \$100,000 worth of wheat, pork, whiskey, and potash. Fifteen schooners and open boats, capable of carrying from twenty-five to seventy tons each, tacked back and forth between the various American and Canadian lake ports at the latter date.<sup>16</sup> Several lake boats were built on the lower river in

<sup>11</sup> Horatio G. Spafford, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (1813), p. 136.

<sup>12</sup> Tryon Account Books (1800-1805), MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc. The entries under the names of 122 customers show a frequent sale of lead, powder, salt, potash, lye, "clove water," tobacco, and whiskey, the last being the most frequent article of sale. See *Ontario Repository*, July 11, 1809, for an announcement of the sale of the "late John Tryon's" estate of 315 acres in Boyle which mentions a warehouse on Irondequoit Creek, and two partially improved farms equipped with dwelling houses, barns, a distillery, and orchards containing over 300 apple trees. See also A. Emerson Babcock, "The City of Tryon and Vicinity," *R. H. S., Pub.*, I, 117-118.

<sup>13</sup> See above, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 410-413; O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 244; Emma M. P. Greer, "Home Builders of Old Charlotte," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XI, 245-248. Mrs. Greer quotes a journal of Donald McKenzie, husband of one of Hinchey's daughters.

<sup>15</sup> Campbell, *DeWitt Clinton*, p. 113; Greer, "Home Builder," p. 250. See the town plat of Charlotte, Greer, p. 244.

<sup>16</sup> Greer, "Home Builders," p. 248; T[homas] C[oo]per, *Ride to Niagara*, p. 32; Augustus Porter, "Early Navigation on the Lakes," *Buffalo Hist. Soc., Pub.*, VII,

these years,<sup>17</sup> and an active commerce developed between Tryon Town and Latta's wharf, as the produce of the interior settlers was transported from Irondequoit Landing in shallow boats, poled along the shore and into the Genesee, for transfer to lake vessels.<sup>18</sup>

By 1810, the village of Charlotte with its nineteen houses had attracted the interest of several enterprising merchants.<sup>19</sup> One arrived with "a handsome assortment of dry goods and groceries," which he proposed to exchange for pot and pearl ashes and white oak staves, while two rival forwarding companies established warehouses and announced rate schedules for their schooners to both Queenstown and Montreal.<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Child, destined to figure prominently in Rochester's early history, opened a store at Charlotte and advertised a quantity of window glass.<sup>21</sup> John Mastick moved down from Canandaigua to open a law office, and James Wadsworth purchased a central lot in the village.<sup>22</sup>

The growth of trade stimulated renewed activity at several other points on the lower Genesee. When the seven Hanford brothers from Rome, New York, took up the work at Fall Town, a store was opened,<sup>23</sup> and trade prospects soon made Hanford's Landing a serious rival to Charlotte.<sup>24</sup> Curiously enough, the *Guide in the Wilderness*, edited in 1810 by Judge William Cooper of Cooperstown, listed "the first falls of the Genesee, where there is a fine harbour for ships of two hundred tons" as one of the most favorable town sites left undeveloped in the state.<sup>25</sup> The power resources of the area attracted some attention. Though the

317-322. On June 3, 1812, Joseph Ellicott wrote in his Letter Book: "I learn that those who have any flour to carry to Canada from the mouth of the Genesee River find no difficulty in carrying it whenever they choose. I begin to be of the opinion that non-intercourse and embargo is all Stuff! Stuff! Stuff! Stuff! Stuff!" Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, XXVI, 148.

<sup>17</sup> Porter, "Early Navigation," p. 322; E. P. Clapp, "Travel, Trade and Transportation of the Pioneers," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc., *passim*, mentions the *Jemima*, *Isabella*, *Genesee Packet*, and the *Clarissa* as built on the lower Genesee or Irondequoit.

<sup>18</sup> Clapp, "Travel, Trade and Transportation," pp. 84-85, 90ff.

<sup>19</sup> Spafford, *Gazetteer*, p. 77; Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, pp. 514-515.

<sup>20</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 9, Oct. 16, 1810, Jan. 1, Apr. 23, 1811.

<sup>21</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Sept. 11, 1810.

<sup>22</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Mar. 19, 1811; "Deeds from Genesee County Records," I, 234, Monroe County Court House.

<sup>23</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 23, 1810. Frederick Hanford advertised a "well chosen assortment of Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, and Crockery. Also Iron Hollow Ware and Pot Ash Kettles; Window Glass, Sole Leather, Shoes, etc."

<sup>24</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 18, 1810; P. P. Dickinson, "Steamboat Hotel," Samson Scrapbook, No. 52, pp. 11-12, Roch. Hist. Soc.; William F. Peck, *Landmarks of Monroe County* (Boston, 1895), p. 69.

<sup>25</sup> Judge [William] Cooper, *A Guide in the Wilderness, or the History of the First Settlement in the Western Counties of New York* (Dublin, 1810), p. 31.

mills at the upper falls, abandoned in 1804 when Josiah Fish moved away, stood in ruins, a half mile further north Charles Harford, an Englishman of considerable means, erected a mill in 1808 on the west bank overlooking the main falls. Built at a cost of one thousand dollars and operated by a tub wheel, the small mill served the neighborhood's moderate needs until 1810 when Harford, discouraged by the difficult portage from the rapids above and to the landing below,<sup>26</sup> sold his 200-acre mill site to Thomas Mumford of Cayuga Bridge and Matthew and Francis Brown of Rome.<sup>27</sup> Another settlement had appeared by this time on the west bank at the upper rapids where boats coming down the river were sometimes forced to unload. A tavern operated by Isaac Castle served travelers for a few years, but the site, ambitiously designated Castle Town, failed to justify the hopes of its promoter, James Wadsworth.<sup>28</sup>

The lower Genesee still had the appearance of a neglected wilderness when, in the summer of 1809, Midshipman James Fenimore Cooper, sailing westward on Lake Ontario with a half-dozen companions, was driven by a sudden squall to seek shelter in the mouth of the river. The hungry crewmen were creating near-famine conditions wherever they landed on the sparsely settled shore between Oswego and Niagara. Near the Genesee they found a small log hut where they procured some bread, milk and two pies. The next day, after buying a sheep for a half eagle from a settler further inland, they rejoiced when a shift in the wind favored a renewal of their journey.<sup>29</sup>

A more experienced traveler, Thomas Cooper, from Pennsylvania, judged Allan's old location, which he found that spring in "perfect ruins," as "the best site for a mill I ever saw," while Harford's location was likewise described as a "perfectly secure mill seat." The grandeur of the natural amphitheater created by the falls roused this visitor's enthusiasm, but the chief activity observed on the river was that of a half-dozen men fishing in the gorge below the lower falls.<sup>30</sup>

That there was something more than good fishing at the Genesee falls was evident from the increasing interest shown in the region. Wheat, which commanded only 12½ cents a bushel in produce at Geneva, sold for 31 cents in cash at Charlotte.<sup>31</sup> DeWitt Clinton, intensely interested

<sup>26</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 584; T[homas] C[oooper], *Ride to Niagara*, p. 28. Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 2, gives a description of this mill.

<sup>27</sup> Turner, p. 592.

<sup>28</sup> Turner, p. 580; R. LaRue Cober, *Castle Town: An Historiette of Southwest Rochester* (Genesee Baptist Church, Rochester, 1935).

<sup>29</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Lives of Distinguished American Naval Officers* (Auburn, 1846), II, 131-134.

<sup>30</sup> T[homas] C[oooper], *Ride to Niagara*, pp. 27-33.

<sup>31</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 503.

in such matters, was careful to note on his visit in July, 1810, that 1,000 barrels each of flour, pork, and potash, and 100,000 staves had already been shipped that season to Montreal.<sup>32</sup> A week or so later an anonymous visitor remarked that "the timber of this country must be carried down the St. Lawrence; it never will pay for transportation to the Atlantic by any other route."<sup>33</sup>

Information of this sort prompted James Wadsworth to inquire in 1810 about the possibility of purchasing the mill seat at the upper falls.<sup>34</sup> Wadsworth already had large interests in the commercial potentialities of the lower Genesee. In his wide ranging land speculations, the founder of Genesee had acquired a 60,000-acre tract only six miles west of Fall Town, as a handbill of 1809 announced,<sup>35</sup> and he saw clearly that a mill town of considerable importance was destined to arise at the falls.

#### COLONEL ROCHESTER'S SETTLEMENT

But the choice site—the 100-acre mill lot so lightly given to Ebenezer Allan two decades before—had already fallen by a queer stroke of chance into the hands of three Maryland speculators. Williamson's promotion of the Pulteney Estate had prompted Charles Carroll, William Fitzhugh, and Nathaniel Rochester to journey northward in 1800 along the Susquehanna and Williamson's road to view the Genesee Country. They came again in 1803, carefully selecting several large tracts, chiefly in the southern part of the territory, but just before concluding their second visit a friend at Canandaigua persuaded them to examine the mill seat on the lower Genesee. Though the sawmill had already been washed out by the flood of 1800, and the gristmill suffered from neglect, the three prospectors saw the potentialities of the site and jointly signed

<sup>32</sup> Campbell, *DeWitt Clinton*, p. 113.

<sup>33</sup> Samson Scrapbook, No. 40, p. 95, quoting a letter printed in the *Albany Ballance and State Journal* in 1811, but dated from the mouth of the Genesee, July 27, 1810.

<sup>34</sup> Turner, p. 587: "I wish that tract of 100 acres could be purchased of the Maryland gentlemen. The Bridge and Mill seat render it very valuable indeed." Three years previous, Wadsworth had already noted the possibilities for trade at Fall Town: "I could now purchase to be delivered at Fall Town, 10,000 bushels of wheat at 50 cents. It could then be ground and sent to Montreal for 75 cents per barrel. Our field ashes which are now wasted, would be an object of considerable consequence." Turner, p. 581.

<sup>35</sup> "Vessels of 200 tons, sail from Lake Ontario up the Genesee river to the lower falls; this place is called Fall-town Landing, and is only six miles from the tract now offered for sale. A barrel of flour can now be sent from Fall-town Landing to Montreal for one dollar, and a barrel of pot-ashes for one dollar and a half; these prices will be reduced, as the business of transportation increases. Most articles of American product command as high prices at Montreal as at New York." Samson Scrapbook, No. 51, p. 100.

a contract for its purchase at \$17.50 an acre.<sup>36</sup> Content with their speculative ventures, these gentlemen forthwith returned to their Maryland homes to await a time when the advancing settlers would increase the value of their holdings and make the neighborhood congenial to their womenfolk.<sup>37</sup>

When in 1810 Colonel Rochester, already in his fifty-ninth year, finally determined to move to the Genesee Country, it was to the settlement at Dansville, conveniently located on the southern trade route, that he led the way. A caravan of three great Conestoga wagons, two carriages, and numerous saddle horses transported his wife and eleven children, as well as several slaves and other servants, over the long, tedious journey to the frontier. Rochester's commercial and industrial affairs in Hagerstown had qualified him for similar projects in Dansville, and there he soon had a flour mill, sawmill, paper mill, stillhouse, blacksmith's shop, and village store in full operation and the work of clearing a 450-acre farm well started.<sup>38</sup> In the midst of these activities Colonel Rochester thought at one time of withdrawing from the lower Genesee venture, but after due consideration he found time to make occasional visits to the falls, forty miles down the valley to the north.<sup>39</sup> It was fortunate that he could spare this attention, for neither of his partners had as yet migrated from Maryland,<sup>40</sup> and developments were progressing so rapidly on the lower Genesee that further neglect of the mill lot might have given the advantage to one of the rival town sites.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> [Nathaniel Rochester], "A Brief Sketch of the Life of Nathaniel Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 305-313. See also the collection of materials on Colonel Rochester and his family assembled in R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 255-388. A copy of the contract for the purchase of the 100-acre tract, signed Nov. 8, 1803 (MS in Ontario County Historical Society, Canandaigua, N. Y.) is printed in *Rochester History*, I, No. 4, 21-22. The best account of Col. Rochester's part in the founding of the village is that of Howard L. Osgood, "Rochester: Its Founders and Its Founding," R. H. S., *Pub.*, I, 53-70.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Carroll to Col. Rochester, Williamsburgh, July 8, 1817, Rochester Letters, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc. Carroll recalls that it was "the want of money" rather than the "expectation we were to settle" at the falls that prompted the sale of the 100-acre tract in 1803 by the Pulteney agent, Col. Robert Troup.

<sup>38</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 26, 1809; Sept. 4, 1810; Apr. 7, 1811; Aug. 13, 1813; Rochester Letters, 1807-1813; *Ontario Messenger*, Aug. 10, 1813.

<sup>39</sup> Col. Rochester to Charles Carroll, Dansville, 1811, quoted in R. H. S., *Pub.*, I, 63.

<sup>40</sup> Carroll and Fitzhugh had in 1800 jointly purchased 12,000 acres of land on Canaseraga Creek in the towns of Groveland and Sparta, to which they moved in 1816. Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 365; Osgood, "Rochester: Its Founders," pp. 55-56.

<sup>41</sup> Wm. Fitzhugh to Col. Rochester, Washington Co., Md., Oct. 18, 1812, Rochester Letters. Fitzhugh, from distant Maryland, felt secure in the advantages of their site: "The public road and the Bridge at the Falls of the Genesee will greatly add to the value of our Interests there . . . and although improvements are making near it—its natural advantages are so great—it can receive no material Injury from them."

Enos Stone was already at work building a crude sawmill on the east bank near the upper falls when Colonel Rochester rode down in 1811 to survey the 100 acres into town lots. The construction of the bridge was delayed for the want of suitable boards, but the progress of Stone's sawmill promised one solution, while the plans of the Brown brothers for the reconstruction of Harford's mills foretold an abundance of timber for the houses of the prospective settlers as well as an ample supply of flour for their ovens.<sup>42</sup> Colonel Rochester accordingly engaged Enos Stone to serve as agent for the lots advertised for sale in the Canandaigua papers that fall.<sup>43</sup>

A southern rather than New England inspiration for the town appeared in the generous provision for highways and their gridiron pattern, as well as in the absence of a public common.<sup>44</sup> Two broad streets were staked out, each six rods wide. One of these, appropriately named Buffalo Street, extended westward from the bridge, while the other ran north and south, crossing the former at a main four corners a short distance from the bridge. Quarter-acre lots on these business streets were offered at \$50 each, except for the choice northwest lot at the Four Corners which was priced at \$200. Several additional streets, each four rods in width, were laid out, and \$30 asked for lots on these back streets. Five-dollar down payments secured the lots to prospective buyers, on condition that a house or shop 20 by 16 feet in size be erected by October, 1812, for only those ready to put their shoulders to the wheel of progress were wanted in the projected village.<sup>45</sup> One large central plot was reserved for a court house, indicating that Colonel Rochester had the future possibilities of his settlement in mind, while the section along the river south of the bridge was left undivided until plans could be perfected for an improved raceway and the mill lots surveyed.<sup>46</sup>



Enos Stone proved an admirable choice as local agent for the new settlement. Lacking the resources to develop his own holdings east of the river, he wisely concluded that the value of his land would be

<sup>42</sup> Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 593.

<sup>43</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Aug. 20, 1811.

<sup>44</sup> See the plat of Rochesterville, Plate III, No. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Rochester to Enos Stone, Dansville, Aug. 14, 1811, in Turner, p. 587.

<sup>46</sup> Rochester had numerous predecessors as town planners in Western New York. It is therefore interesting to compare his plan with those of Williamson for Geneva and Bath; Phelps for Canandaigua, and Joseph Ellicott for Batavia and Buffalo. That for Buffalo was the most ambitious and reflects the influence of the plan for Washington, D. C., with which Ellicott had some association, but all save Rochester were built around a public square. All the plats provided spacious house lots and broad main streets to permit the easy movement of horsedrawn vehicles. See Turpin C. Bannister, "Early Town Planning in New York State," *New York History*, XXIV (April, 1943), 191-192; Survey of Annin and Barton of the Geneva Plat, about 1795, MS in Steuben County Clerk's Office, Bath, N. Y.



greatly enhanced by a thriving village on the opposite bank. Moreover, the work of constructing his sawmill, building a second frame house, and tending a six-acre corn patch kept him engaged at the upper falls, where he was sure to be available in case prospective settlers should appear.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, many land hunters, scouting for favorable locations throughout western New York, Ohio, and Indiana Territory, were prompted by the threat of war on the more exposed frontier to visit the Genesee falls, where Enos Stone interested several of them in the advantages of Colonel Rochester's projected village.<sup>48</sup> Abelard Reynolds was on such a scouting expedition when he stopped at the falls en route to Charlotte early in 1812. Despite the encouraging prospects of previously visited town sites, none impressed Reynolds so favorably as this, and before returning east two lots were contracted for.<sup>49</sup> Thus, by the end of the settlement's birth year, a dozen lots had been disposed of by Colonel Rochester and his agent.<sup>50</sup>

Though a few settlers of respectable means were to locate at the falls during the early years, central figures in the pageantry of Rochester's development were the humble miller, Hamlet Scrantom, and his family. Indeed, Scrantom was sufficiently characteristic of his fellow townsmen to merit the honor later conferred on him as the pioneer settler.<sup>51</sup> Born in Durham, Connecticut, he had migrated with other pioneers to Turin, New York, but the heavy snows of the Black River Country prompted him to seek a new home on the Genesee. After a visit to the falls in March, 1812,<sup>52</sup> at which time he contracted for a house lot and made arrangements to occupy a cabin already under construction, Hamlet returned to fetch his family from Turin as soon as the winter drifts should disappear.<sup>53</sup> It was the 20th of April before the start could be made, but finally the heavy wagon was loaded with provisions and household articles and covered with a linen cloth for protection. Mrs. Scrantom climbed aboard with her two daughters and four sons, while her husband started the two oxen and the lead horse on the 175-mile journey to their new home.

Passing through the flourishing village of Canandaigua on the ninth

<sup>47</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 2; O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 250.

<sup>48</sup> Enos Stone to Nathaniel Rochester, Sept. 13, 1811, Oct. 31, 1811, Dec. 19, 1811, June 30, 1812, Rochester Letters.

<sup>49</sup> Abelard Reynolds, "Autobiography," *Rochester Post-Express*, Sept. 23, 1884; Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, pp. 57, 100.

<sup>50</sup> Nathaniel Rochester's Cash Book for Sale of Lots in the 100-Acre Tract, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>51</sup> Pioneer Assoc. of Rochester, Record Book, and Scrapbook. Hamlet Scrantom was elected first president of this organization on its establishment in 1847; Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> Nathaniel Rochester's Cash Book.

<sup>53</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Turin, Apr. 18, 1812, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 172-173.

day, Hamlet Scrantom no doubt read with concern editor James Bemis's forebodings of war with Canada, while his wife possibly yearned for one of the straw bonnets in Miss Peck's shop near the schoolhouse.<sup>54</sup> But they continued their journey, and on the eleventh day the weary migrants drew up at the rapids opposite Castle's tavern and were soon ferried across to the west bank. The next day, May 1st, Scrantom and his sons tramped through a light snow down to the upper falls, where they found their cabin home standing roofless in the center of a swampy and desolate five-acre clearing. The framework of the bridge was sufficiently completed to permit them to cross to the east bank, where Enos Stone, eager to engage an experienced miller for his almost completed sawmill, provided temporary shelter in his abandoned shanty. By July 4th, the Scrantoms were able to move into the new cabin (on the site of the Powers Building), the first permanent residents in Colonel Rochester's settlement at the falls.<sup>55</sup>

#### THE HAZARDS OF WAR

Disquieting news of the outbreak of hostilities had reached the Genesee scarcely two weeks before.<sup>56</sup> The prospect of war had long been a subject of bitter controversy. The bold policies of frontier Republicans had generally carried the majority in recent elections, sending the War Hawk, Peter B. Porter, to Congress as representative for the Western District in 1810,<sup>57</sup> yet popular sentiment was by no means united in approval of war. The widespread activities of the Friends of Peace found support in Ontario County, with several settlers on the lower Genesee taking part in the agitation.<sup>58</sup> As the threat of hostilities increased, interest in the traditional militia days revived,<sup>59</sup> but the political repercussions proved unfavorable for the Jeffersonian-Republicans, who lost to the Federal-Republicans in November, 1812.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 21, 1812; Hamilton, *The Country Printer*, pp. 72-73, 83-84, 258.

<sup>55</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," pp. 1-2; Edward R. Foreman, "First Families of Rochester and Their Dwellings," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 349-351.

<sup>56</sup> *Ontario Repository*, June 30, 1812.

<sup>57</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 28, 1812. In spite of his oft-repeated disapproval of the war talk, Bemis prints at length the speech of Congressman Porter in Washington on Dec. 30, 1811; *Dictionary of American Biography*, XV, 99-100.

<sup>58</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Sept. 15, 1812. Ezra Patterson and Oliver Culver represented Boyle in a Peace Convention in Canandaigua on Sept. 10, 1812. See also W. H. Goodman, "The Origins of the War of 1812: A Survey of Changing Interpretations," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXVIII (Sept., 1941).

<sup>59</sup> Myron Holley to George Newbold, Aug. 20, 1807, MS at Univ. Roch.; *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 30, 1810; Barton, *Early Reminiscences*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>60</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 22, 1812. Despite the efforts of the Federalists to appropriate the name "Republican," the Jeffersonians were successful in retaining that title.

On the lower Genesee the Federalists had generally held the majority.<sup>61</sup> Only in the May, 1812, election of state legislators did the Jeffersonians carry the town of Boyle, 156 to 152.<sup>62</sup> Six months later the vote was reversed, 224 to 92, and the Federalists likewise carried Ontario County, 3250 to 2229. The town across the river turned Federalist, 44 to 23, although the staunch Jeffersonians of Genesee and Niagara Counties retained reduced majorities.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, in face of shifting fortunes of war, the exposed settlements near the Niagara maintained their Jeffersonian allegiance, while the Genesee settlers, impatient for the renewal of peaceful trade, joined with the Federalists of Canandaigua and Bloomfield in agitating for peace.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the war's outbreak, activity at the Genesee falls increased as the summer of 1812 advanced. The workmen returned to finish the bridge, and with the building of a log causeway over the marshy stretch of the road to Pittsford, a highway to the east was at last available. Young Jehiel Barnard, a tailor from Rome, claimed the honor of being the first new settler to use this improved road in September, 1812, but the traffic was soon greatly augmented.<sup>65</sup> Scrantom kept busy sawing boards for the bridge and for several lot holders who were endeavoring to get their houses built within the prescribed time limit, though apparently none of the other first families arrived before the next spring. Scrantom's oxen were kept equally busy dragging logs to the mill and hauling heavy loads to and from the landing below the falls.<sup>66</sup> Abelard Reynolds, the first to complete a frame house on the 100-acre tract, brought his family from Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in February, 1813, opening the village post office and pioneer saddlery on the site later occupied by the Reynolds Arcade.<sup>67</sup>

The accommodations afforded by Isaac W. Stone's tavern on the east bank and by Enos Stone's shack and other pioneer buildings soon proved inadequate for the number of workmen and prospective lot buyers congregating at the falls. The Scrantoms took in boarders at \$1.75 a week,

<sup>61</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 10, 1803, May 9, 1809, May 8, 1810.

<sup>62</sup> *Ontario Repository*, June 2, 1812.

<sup>63</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 22, 29, 1812; Mar. 9, 1813.

<sup>64</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 13, June 22, 1813; May 10, Nov. 29, 1814; Feb. 14, May 9, 1815.

<sup>65</sup> Moses Atwater to Samuel J. Andrews, Canandaigua, Oct. 28, 1812, *Atwater-Andrews Letter, 1812-1814* (Rochester, 1914). For Barnard's claim see Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 2; Amy H. Coughton, "The Scrantoms and Barnards in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 237.

<sup>66</sup> Hamlet Scrantom, *Day Book*, pp. 39-45. Scrantom sawed a total of 35,827 feet for Enos Stone up to Dec. 29, 1812. Isaac W. Stone, Abelard Reynolds, Cobb, Hanford, Marshall, Oliver Culver, and Carter were other names in his lumber account for 1812. Scrantom received 8 shillings a day for the services of his team of oxen.

<sup>67</sup> Amy H. Coughton, "Historic Reynolds Arcade," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VIII, 97-99; Abelard Reynolds, "Autobiography," *Rochester Post-Express*, Sept. 23, 1884.

especially after the completion of their frame house in December provided more comfortable facilities.<sup>68</sup> James Wadsworth came down in August, 1812, stopping for twelve days in the Scrantom cabin,<sup>69</sup> and in September Colonel Rochester and his lady visited the settlement, prompting Mrs. Scrantom to bustle about and prepare tea for her guests.<sup>70</sup> Young Francis Brown, too busy reconstructing the Harford mill to complete his large house overlooking the main falls, was a frequent guest.<sup>71</sup> Moses Atwater came over from Canandaigua to examine the mill seat on the east bank at the main falls.<sup>72</sup> Galloping messengers of the military forces stationed along the frontier brought moments of worried excitement, but an unusually heavy winter served practically to isolate the tiny hamlet.

Except for the threatening appearance of British war vessels off the Genesee late in 1812,<sup>73</sup> the danger of invasion did not appear as a real menace to the settlement at the falls that year. The marauding bear or the coiled rattlesnake still provided more imminent hazards.<sup>74</sup> Neighboring Indians frequently occasioned uneasy thoughts to lonely housewives who could not forget the events of the frontier of their childhood, though the numerous youngsters in the settlement had already found some of the Indian games to be great sport, notably that of sliding down the hill overlooking the main falls on long strips of bark.<sup>75</sup> The most serious effect of the war on the struggling community during the first winter was the extent to which the scant food supplies were drained off to feed the army.<sup>76</sup> Wheat rose to a dollar a bushel, and even at that price Scrantom had to drive sixteen miles, from one farmhouse to another, in search of five bushels to meet the needs of his busy household.<sup>77</sup> Fortu-

<sup>68</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Feb. 7, 1813, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 177.

<sup>69</sup> Hamlet Scrantom, *Day Book*, p. 44.

<sup>70</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," pp. 26-27.

<sup>71</sup> "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 3; Turner, *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*, p. 593.

<sup>72</sup> *Atwater-Andrews Letters*, Moses Atwater to Samuel J. Andrews, Canandaigua, Oct. 11, 1812, and *passim*.

<sup>73</sup> Rear Admiral Franklin Hanford, "Visits of American and British Naval Vessels to the Genesee River," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 41-42; *Ontario Repository*, Sept. 15, Oct. 6, 1812.

<sup>74</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," pp. 14, 23-24, 35-36; R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 348-351. The settlers contributed their share of enlistments to the army on the Niagara. See letters to Col. Rochester from his sons, William B. and John C. while on military service, Aug. 1813-May, 1815, MSS, Univ. Roch.

<sup>75</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 58.

<sup>76</sup> Augustus Porter to Col. Rochester, Nov. 16, 1812; Underhill and Seymour to Col. Rochester, Dec. 10, 1812, Rochester Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc. Blanket orders for as much flour as he can deliver at Buffalo are here sent to Col. Rochester at Dansville.

<sup>77</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Feb. 7, 1813, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 177.

nately a good hunting season helped to tide the community over until spring.<sup>78</sup>



The succeeding year (in spite of a taste of both victory and disaster on the more-exposed frontier) brought continued growth to the falls settlement. On June 16, 1813, Sir James Yeo, "commodore" of the British squadron of eight vessels, anchored off the mouth of the Genesee and seized "between four and five hundred barrels of flour, pork, etc. together with a large boat laden with 1,200 bushels of corn destined for our troops at Niagara."<sup>79</sup> George Latta, younger brother of Samuel and clerk in charge of these government stores, was courteously provided with a receipt for the spoils. A force of militia arrived the next day in time to shout defiance at the departing fleet, and no injury was suffered by the villagers during the overnight occupation, but the prospects of Charlotte were seriously clouded, prompting many of the settlers to flee inland.<sup>80</sup> Nearly three months later a running skirmish occurred off the Genesee between the rival Ontario fleets, with ten American vessels under "Commodore" Isaac Chauncey in pursuit of Yeo's smaller squadron. Unfortunately the greater speed of the Canadians prevented Chauncey from duplicating Perry's decisive victory on Lake Erie the previous day.<sup>81</sup> American confidence, already stimulated as General Dearborn and his successors carried the fighting across the Niagara into Canada, was greatly enhanced by these naval engagements.

Back on the Genesee the demand for supplies boosted prices, attracting merchants from more exposed situations to the settlement at the upper falls where a spirit of optimism held sway.<sup>82</sup> Loads of produce

<sup>78</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 58.

<sup>79</sup> *Ontario Repository*, June 22, 1813.

<sup>80</sup> Hanford, "Visits of American and British Naval Vessels," pp. 42-45.

<sup>81</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Sept. 14, 1813; Hanford, pp. 46-53. Chauncey had two ships, one brig, and seven schooners with a total tonnage of 2402, and 865 men, but he could only throw a broadside of 1288 lbs.; while Yeo with two ships, two brigs, two schooners, and 770 men could throw a broadside of 1374 lbs., according to Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (6th ed.; New York, 1897), pp. 243-245.

<sup>82</sup> Abelard Reynolds to William H. Moseley, Jan. 14, 1813, quoted in *The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History and Biography of America*, III (1859), 156. "I should be pleased to see you at this place [Rochester] whenever it may suit your convenience, and I think for an enterprising young man there is no place within the scope of my knowledge, that presents greater advantages than this, and as soon as the War is over, none in my opinion will advance more rapidly in importance. Truly it is now, rather a forbidding place in its appearance. I live in a log hut, and there are some half a dozen within a half a mile of me. Mr. Ely from Pittsfield is here and thinks of erecting a mill, the water privileges being very extensive, perhaps no greater water power in the State. Indeed, we feel that this will ultimately be an important section of our country. I have only to repeat, I would recommend you to come hither as soon as you get through with your studies."

arrived by wagon from the east and by boat from the farms up the valley.<sup>83</sup> Several new houses appeared at the falls, and Abelard Reynolds worked long hours to fill the militia orders at his saddlery.<sup>84</sup> When Silas O. Smith, formerly located at Hanford's Landing, erected a store at the Four Corners, Ira West, formerly at Bloomfield, moved in to take charge.<sup>85</sup> Francis Brown got his mill in operation and accumulated 4000 bushels of wheat at \$1.25 in anticipation of rising prices. Hamlet Scrantom was able to write home with considerable optimism on December 2, 1813:

The Village is flourishing beyond all calculation, property has risen one half, that is the lots. Last year at this time I had one Neighbor in the village, now I have ten, that is, there are eleven families, all compact, & every lot on the main street is taken up & a number of back lots & there must be at least twenty houses built next summer. There is a number of men of large property have bought here, every kind of mechanical business is good & money is plenty. . . .

The people are very industrious here & continue to put up buildings. In a few days we have to raise a very large store-house for Capt. Brown, 3 stories high on an eight foot stone wall, calculated to require one hundred men to raise it. . . .

If there is any mechanic among you that wishes to come to the western country I can recommend this place. . . .

Possibly some one may come on this winter, if that is the case & you can procure a small keg of oysters for me I should be glad, they are brought here every winter but bear a high price.<sup>86</sup>

But before the end of the month the disastrous retreat of the American forces, the capture of Fort Niagara, and the burning in quick succession of Black Rock and Buffalo spread misery and terror throughout the frontier.<sup>87</sup> The settlement at the falls was swollen for a time by refugees, but the pell-mell flight soon carried most of them further inland, together with some of the villagers themselves. Scrantom reloaded

<sup>83</sup> Charles Carroll, *Journal and Observations of Chas. Carroll of B[elle View] on a Tour to examine the distilleries & paper Mills of the Eastern States* (1814), Rochester Letters. "Boats of 300 Barrels burthen go from Hermitage to the falls of Genesee." *Pioneer Assoc. Record Book*. In 1850 Gideon Cobb recalled that in 1813 he had piloted a boatload of fruit from Irondequoit to Sackett's Harbor, and in the succeeding winter operated a four-ox team hauling provisions to and from the mouth of the river and the settlement at the bridge.

<sup>84</sup> Abelard Reynolds, "Autobiography," *Rochester Post-Express*, Sept. 23, 1884.

<sup>85</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, X, 196, quotes from the reminiscences of Silas O. Smith; see his obituary in Peck's *Scrapbook*, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Dec. 2, 1813, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 178-181.

<sup>87</sup> James Wadsworth to Mr. Richardson and Col. Rochester, Genesee, Jan. 3, 1814, MS, Univ. Roch.; Robert W. Bingham, *The Cradle of the Queen City* (Buffalo, 1931, Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, vol. XXXI), pp. 318-337.

his ox cart and moved his family to a cabin in the hills southeast of the village where he had recently bought a small farm, while Captain Isaac W. Stone of the local militia sent his children to Bloomfield, safe in the interior. However, as the village was soon crowded with militia gathering from near-by settlements for the march to Niagara, courage revived.<sup>88</sup>

Sure progress was made even during these troubled days. Huldah Strong, who had accompanied her sister, Mrs. Reynolds, when Abelard moved his family to the falls early in 1813, gathered the children of the neighborhood together late that year in the pioneer school, meeting part of the time in the room over Jehiel Barnard's tailor shop.<sup>89</sup> Plans were laid in December for the construction of a district schoolhouse the next spring, but Silas O. Smith, who cleared the lot back of his store, where the court house and school were to be erected, earned the privilege of raising a crop of wheat there that summer, and the construction of the schoolhouse of Gates District No. 2 had to wait the harvest. Nevertheless, the fall season found the settlement well equipped for its educational responsibilities.<sup>90</sup>

The room over Barnard's tailor shop likewise housed the first religious meetings when the Reverend Daniel Brown rode over from Pittsford on several occasions to conduct Baptist services.<sup>91</sup> The first physician, Dr. Jonah Brown,<sup>92</sup> and the first lawyer, John Mastick,<sup>93</sup> settled at the falls during these years, as did the first blacksmith and toolmaker, James B. Carter. Hamlet Scrantom, seeking a rest from the long hours and heavy labor of the sawmill, erected a bake oven and established a grocery or dram shop to supply the accommodations so characteristic of frontier villages.

East of the river land speculation was the order of the day. Several attempts to buy portions of Enos Stone's farm were unsuccessful, though Abelard Reynolds, by trading an improved farm on the Black River for the 100-acre forest lot adjoining Stone on the northeast, secured at \$5 an acre land that was later to prove of great value.<sup>94</sup> South of Stone the river lots, divided into 32-acre plots, were disposed of at from \$8 to \$30 an acre, and here Scrantom and Carter acquired

<sup>88</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Dec. 26, 1813, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 182-184.

<sup>89</sup> Blake McKelvey, "On the Educational Frontier," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 8-9.

<sup>90</sup> McKelvey, "Educational Frontier," pp. 9-10; Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Dec. 2, 1813, Jan. 24, 1815, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 180, 190.

<sup>91</sup> Annah B. Yates, "Early Rochester Family Records," No. XXIII, *Rochester Post-Express*, Dec. 3, 1910.

<sup>92</sup> Betsey C. Corner, "A Century of Medicine in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 322-324; Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, p. 19.

<sup>93</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 6, 1814; John D. Lynn, "Life and Times of John Mastick," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 118-121.

<sup>94</sup> Reynolds, "Autobiography."

valuable titles.<sup>95</sup> Moses Atwater of Canandaigua purchased 32 acres on the river north of the Stone farm, paying \$1000 for the plot with its command of the water rights on the east bank at the main falls, but his plans for its development were deferred by the war.<sup>96</sup> Atwater was so enthusiastic over the venture that he wished to form a company able to invest "20 thousand dollars or more in real property contiguous to those falls."<sup>97</sup> It seemed desirable to acquire the tract between his site and the bridge, but the best offer Enos Stone would make was fifteen acres at \$150 an acre—not including the one-acre lots at the bridge already valued at \$1000 each.<sup>98</sup> Atwater, kept busy with the affairs of the newly established bank in Canandaigua as well as with his judicial duties at the county seat, was impatient for the arrival of his Connecticut associates in the mill-site venture, urging them to bring along their daughters to join his own, as "we have a good school" in Canandaigua.<sup>99</sup>

There was a crisis in Rochester's affairs at this time of which the settlers had no inkling. As several of the lot holders were completing their payments, the approaching necessity for registering the deeds prompted the proprietors to search their own title. It was quickly discovered that the several previous transfers had not been carefully recorded, and frantic letters were exchanged between the principals.<sup>100</sup> William B. Rochester journeyed to Albany and then to New York in an attempt to trace down the witnesses to the various transactions in which the hundred-acre tract had been involved.<sup>101</sup> After much labor, however, the necessary affidavits were collected and the title was properly secured, admitted, and recorded in the Genesee County records.<sup>102</sup>

Fortunately the actual settlers knew nothing of these legal difficulties; they were sufficiently worried by the uncertain military developments

<sup>95</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Brighton, Jan. 24, 1815, R. H. S. Pub., VII, 189. Scrantom had bought at \$8 an acre, paying \$100 extra for the improvements which included twelve acres cleared and fenced besides a small log cabin. But already the value had jumped to \$30 an acre for the unsold river lots.

<sup>96</sup> Moses Atwater to Samuel J. Andrews, Oct. 11, 28, Nov. 21, 1812, *Atwater-Andrews Letters*. In addition to the mill seat, the associates bought three adjoining lots along the river to the north at approximately \$10 an acre, making a total investment of \$1856.

<sup>97</sup> Same to same, Jan. 29, 1813.

<sup>98</sup> Same to same, Mar. 27, 1813.

<sup>99</sup> Same to same, Mar. 30, 1813.

<sup>100</sup> Charles Carroll to Col. Rochester, Jan. 7, 1814; William Fitzhugh to Col. Rochester, Apr. 6, 1814, Rochester Letters.

<sup>101</sup> William B. Rochester to Col. Rochester, Albany, June 20, 1814; same to same, New York, June 27, 1814, Rochester Letters.

<sup>102</sup> Joseph Fellows to Col. Rochester, Geneva, Aug. 20, 1814; Jan. 16, 1815, Rochester Letters.



on the none too distant frontier. As the snow melted up the valley and the ice-choked river brought the first flood to the new settlement early in 1814,<sup>103</sup> the people became fearful of the military activities the spring might unleash. Captain Stone set off for Albany to petition for a company to be stationed at the mouth of the Genesee, for without such protection the settlers "do not think it safe to go on with building here next summer."<sup>104</sup>



Unless the war could be quickly terminated—of which there was little prospect—courageous action would be necessary to save the settlement from disintegration. Already Colonel Rochester, in a canny appeal to both the timid and the bold, had advertised his mills and farm at Dansville for sale, declaring his desire "to remove to the Village of Rochester, at the Falls of the Genesee River." Though a favorable price was received for the safe interior location, before Rochester could complete arrangements to move to the falls, another milling enterprise was launched there, prompting the Colonel to locate instead at Bloomfield, nearly twenty miles southeast.<sup>105</sup>

The new mill was that of Josiah Bissell and the Ely brothers, recent arrivals from Massachusetts. Displaying an energy that was long to characterize their efforts, these young men not only opened the second store at the Four Corners,<sup>106</sup> but leased water privileges at the upper falls, where they repaired Allan's old raceway and erected a sawmill as well as the store in five weeks time.<sup>107</sup> Early in 1814 they acquired from Fitzhugh and Carroll (then making a long delayed second visit to the falls)<sup>108</sup> an additional lease granting permission to erect a gristmill on the improved mill race.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Flood Committee, *Flood Conditions in the Genesee River* (Rochester, 1905), pp. 4-5.

<sup>104</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Feb. 19, 1814, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 185.

<sup>105</sup> See his advertisement, *Ontario Messenger*, Aug. 10, 1813. Scrantom in a letter to his father, Feb. 19, 1814, reports that Rochester received \$24,000 for his Dansville properties. He paid \$12,728 for his 157-acre farm at Bloomfield, which provides a clear contrast between improved land values along the state road and the \$5 to \$12 an acre asked for unimproved land in the Rochester area. See Ontario County Deeds, Liber 24, p. 123, cited in R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 382; also Rochester Letters. Rochester's letters to and from Endress and Opp of Easton, Pa., discuss the sale of the remaining portion of his Dansville estate in 1813 and 1814.

<sup>106</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 7, 1813. Hervey Ely advertised in addition to his stock of "Dry Goods, Hard Ware, Groceries, Crockery, & Glassware" a "handsome assortment of mahogany and gilt frame looking glasses." *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 13, 1814. Hervey Ely to Col. Rochester, Mar. 12, 1823, Rochester Letters.

<sup>107</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Dec. 2, 1813, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 178.

<sup>108</sup> Charles Carroll, Journal, Rochester Letters.

<sup>109</sup> Elisha Ely to Col. Rochester, Pittsfield, June 24, 1814, Rochester Letters.

The Ely mills, together with those of Francis Brown at the main falls and Stone's sawmill across the river, promised an adequate supply of lumber and flour until the return of peace, for the danger of invasion had checked improvements at the falls. Colonel Rochester reported "not more than three or four houses building" on the lots previously contracted for, and only one additional lot sold during the year.<sup>110</sup> The scarcity of provisions became less acute as the army contractors ran short of funds, prompting merchants to question their credit.<sup>111</sup> More than one impatient settler declared, "If we do not have a peace immediately we shall have a long, bloody and ruinous war. If the Enemy has the compleat [sic] command of Lake Ontario the inhabitants of this part of our Country will be placed in a very desperate situation."<sup>112</sup>

Indeed, 1814 brought the threat of invasion directly to the lower Genesee, but through courage and good fortune possible disaster was avoided. Captain Isaac W. Stone successfully recruited a company of fifty men, and two cannon were hauled from the arsenal near Canandaigua to defend the Genesee settlements. One of these, an eighteen-pounder, was taken to the mouth of the river, while the other, a four-pounder, was mounted at Deep Hollow bridge, surrounded by breastworks, and pretentiously designated Fort Bender. A local Committee of Safety organized a patrol on the lake shore to warn of the enemy's approach.<sup>113</sup>

These preparations had scarcely been completed when Commodore Yeo's squadron, greatly strengthened during the winter, arrived off Charlotte on the evening of May 14th. With the American fleet still undergoing repairs at Sacketts Harbor, the community was left practically to its own defense. The pioneer tavern keeper had by this time acquired the title of colonel, while the youthful millers, Francis Brown and Elisha Ely, served as captains. Thirty-odd men and boys were mustered from the village and equipped with powder from the Ely brothers' store. Additional militia gathered from the neighborhood, and Colonel Stone, mounted on a white horse, endeavored to station his forces about the mouth of the river in such fashion as to disguise their weakness. Yeo's demands for the surrender of all military supplies were three times rejected on the first day, but an attempt to entice one of the gunboats up the river was frustrated by the premature discharge of the cannon, which precipitated a brief bombardment and the safe with-

<sup>110</sup> Osgood, "Rochester: It's Founders," *R. H. S., Pub.*, I, 67-68.

<sup>111</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Brighton, Jan. 24, 1815, *R. H. S., Pub.*, VII, 189.

<sup>112</sup> Moses Atwater to Samuel J. Andrews, Canandaigua, July 8, 1814, *Atwater-Andrews Letters*.

<sup>113</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Mar. 29, 1814. Hamlet Scrantom, Oliver Culver, Frederick Hanford, and Samuel Latta were named to this committee by a public meeting at Isaac W. Stone's tavern on Mar. 14.

drawal of the gunboat. The stout hearts and bold front shown by the local militia possibly delayed action, affording time for the arrival of reinforcements from the interior on the second day, when General Porter hastened over to take charge. Commodore Yeo, unwilling to risk ambush for so small a prize, finally "hoisted sail and stood down the lake" on the third morning.<sup>114</sup>

The militiamen returned to their homes, full of pride over their achievement, but in succeeding months these same courageous settlers, scattered in their lonely cabins, began to exaggerate the extent of their danger.<sup>115</sup> Even the arrival of Chauncey's re-enforced fleet in September, with a force of 3000 on their way to strengthen the Niagara defenses<sup>116</sup> (where the fort was still held by the British), failed to dispell the gloom accentuated by the death of Colonel Stone when returning from military duty in the West a few weeks before.<sup>117</sup> The villagers became resigned to seeing the "lake shore . . . scourged in the spring."<sup>118</sup>

Rumors of peace had too obvious a relation to the deep-felt desires and speculative interests of every settler to receive credence as the villagers prepared themselves for winter quarters on the Genesee that year. Unusually heavy snows blocked the roads, delaying the irregular mails from Canandaigua. Thus it was the middle of February, 1815,<sup>119</sup> before the news arrived that a treaty of peace had been signed the previous December. The end of the war promised a new day for the village at the falls, and Silas O. Smith rushed from the small group gathered about the postrider to get his pistol and start the general celebration by firing from the steps of his store a rapid fusillade which soon brought out the last stragglers to hear the good news.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 17, 1814; Hanford, "Visits of American and British Naval Vessels," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 55-64.

<sup>115</sup> No doubt the eighty thousand residents of Upper Canada were as much perturbed as were the sixty thousand in western New York.

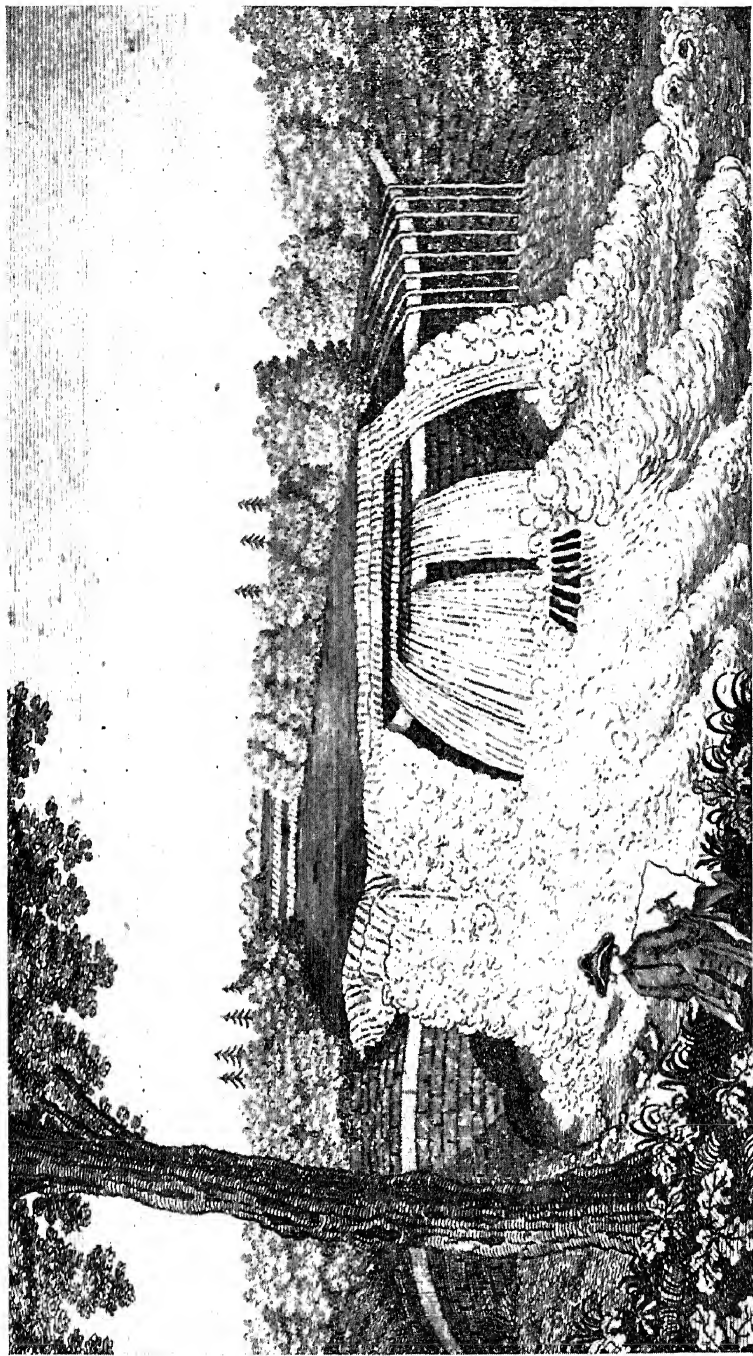
<sup>116</sup> Hanford, p. 64.

<sup>117</sup> Reynolds, "Autobiography," *Rochester Post-Express*, Sept. 23, 1884.

<sup>118</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Rochester, Jan. 24, 1815, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 189.

<sup>119</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Feb. 21, 1815. The news of peace reached Avon by express mail on Feb. 17. British and American flags were soon hoisted over all public buildings along the state road.

<sup>120</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizens' Letters," Scrapbook, Roch. Hist. Soc., p. 16.



II. THE MAIN FALLS OF THE GENESEE, VIEWED FROM THE NORTHEAST, ABOUT 1760



III. THE MAIN FALLS, VIEWED FROM THE NORTHWEST IN 1816

## CHAPTER III

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ROCHESTERVILLE

1815-1818

THE NEWS of peace brought a surge of activity about the lower Genesee. Not only did the prospects of Colonel Rochester's settlement instantly revive, but enterprise reappeared at Charlotte and Fall Town, while new settlements sprang up on the east bank of the river. An intense rivalry developed as many of the more vigorous personalities of western New York directed their energies toward the promotion of towns and mill-sites on the lower Genesee.<sup>1</sup> Settlers trooped in, not as farmers, but as artisans and mechanics, eager to locate in a thriving village. The essential functions of community life were quickly provided at several of the lower Genesee settlements.

But the upper falls, by interrupting the downward flow of Genesee produce and supplying power for the milling of marketable products, gave a decided advantage to Rochester. The roads, converging at the bridge, brought increased activity, enabling the settlement to look forward hopefully toward early incorporation. The attempts of jealous rivals to deflect commerce and retard the growth of the village were frustrated when the projected state canal was routed across the Genesee at this point. Before the end of the decade, Rochester had become a sizable village, ranking as one of the chief towns west of Albany, though it did not as yet suspect the boom growth that was to characterize the next period.

#### PEACEFUL GROWTH ON THE LOWER GENESEE

The shouting and gunplay over the news of peace quickly dispelled the last traces of gloom at the Four Corners. The Ely brothers painted their newly completed gristmill a dull red, and as soon as the spring

<sup>1</sup> Micah Brooks to Col. Rochester, Albany, Nov. 11, 1815, Rochester Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc. While attending the public sale of lands for taxes in various parts of the state, Brooks writes: "I find the Speculators run hard upon Ontario considering it to be valuable Land—there will be none Sold in that Township West of Genesee River at the village of Rochester but a great number of Lots will be sold in the Township on the East side of the River."

thaw cleared the raceway their four pairs of millstones began to turn out an improved grade of flour.<sup>2</sup> Running late into the night, the Red Mill, as soon distinguished, afforded a convenient gathering place for those who sought relaxation after sundown around a flagon of whiskey from the newly established distillery nearby.<sup>3</sup> The rumble of the millstones, mingling with the clangor of Carter's anvil across the street and with the sound of the hammers of Abelard Reynolds' workmen, busy enlarging his house into the first tavern on the west bank,<sup>4</sup> provided a cheerful welcome to Erastus Cook, the first silversmith,<sup>5</sup> to Horace and George Sill, the first booksellers,<sup>6</sup> and to a half-dozen other merchants laden with fresh supplies from Albany or Montreal.<sup>7</sup>

The development of community life was marked by the appearance of several pioneer institutions. Tuneful melodies occasionally drifted down from the second story of Barnard's tailor shop where choristers frequently gathered,<sup>8</sup> replacing the religious and educational activities which had already moved from that accommodating loft to more suitable quarters. The first religious society was organized in August when sixteen charter members formed the pioneer Presbyterian church in the schoolhouse.<sup>9</sup> Two months later an even more significant ceremony united Jehiel Barnard and Delia Scrantom in the first wedlock joined in the settlement.<sup>10</sup> Death was reaping its toll, but the stork more than repaid such losses.<sup>11</sup> The community was taking root; thirty-two additional lots were disposed of by the proprietors,<sup>12</sup> while a census of the inhabitants in December, 1815, showed a total of 331.<sup>13</sup> Thus en-

<sup>2</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Feb. 7, 1815; Maude Motley, "Romance of Milling," R. H. S., *Pub.*, X, 174-176.

<sup>3</sup> Motley, pp. 174-176; Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Jan. 24, 1815, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 190.

<sup>4</sup> Abelard Reynolds, "Autobiography," *Rochester Post-Express*, Sept. 23, 1884.

<sup>5</sup> Edwin Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," Scrapbook, p. 5, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>6</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters"; *Ontario Repository*, Feb. 27, 1816, announces a supply of Mrs. Hafland's new novel, *The Sisters*, as available at the bookstore.

<sup>7</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 5, Aug. 1, Oct. 24, 1815. Umbrellas appear for the first time in these announcements.

<sup>8</sup> John D. Lynn, "Life and Times of John Mastick," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 122.

<sup>9</sup> Charles M. Robinson, *First Church Chronicles: 1815-1915* (Rochester, 1915), pp. 11-24; Orlo J. Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XII, 246-247.

<sup>10</sup> Edwin Scrantom, "The First Wedding in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VI, 313-315.

<sup>11</sup> Edward R. Foreman, "The First White Child Born in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VI, 317-327. In addition to the three children born to Mrs. Josiah Fish in Allan's old mill, five other children were born in the families at the bridge by 1814.

<sup>12</sup> Howard L. Osgood, "Rochester: Its Founders and Founding," R. H. S., *Pub.*, I, 67.

<sup>13</sup> *A Directory for the Village of Rochester* (Rochester, 1827), p. 91.

couraged, the settlement gathered for its first Christmas Ball in the assembly room of Henry Skinner's new house at the Four Corners on Monday, the 25th, at three o'clock.<sup>14</sup>



From the start Rochester included within its orbit the activities at the eastern end of the bridge and those of Frankfort, a half mile farther north on the west bank at the main falls. The scattered settlers had frequently rallied as one community during the war years, and although peace brought an increased incentive to independent development, their unity was never seriously threatened. Thus, Hamlet Scrantom, after residing alternately at both ends of the bridge, moved down to the main falls in 1815 to take charge of Brown's rebuilt gristmill.<sup>15</sup>

Francis Brown provided a vigorous leadership to the Frankfort settlement. The Scrantom family lodged in Brown's large house overlooking the public square which had been laid out in the New York tradition as the center of the development. Here the proprietor and his workmen boarded together until, in 1816, the young bachelor married a daughter of Daniel Penfield, leader of the settlement a few miles east.<sup>16</sup> The road from the bridge was improved, and, with both a sawmill and a gristmill running overtime, new settlers were attracted and a general store opened.<sup>17</sup> Soon, a separate schoolhouse being required, Gates District No. 10 was formed.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Matthew Brown, Jr., arrived from Rome at this time and with his younger brother organized the Genesee Manufacturing Company to develop the water power of the main falls.<sup>19</sup> The company undertook the job of opening Brown's race, which had to be dug much of the way through the limestone ledge that formed the brink of the gorge. The first section, seventy-four rods in length, was completed late in 1816 at a cost of \$3,872.96, providing the "hydraulic power" which ultimately attracted a group of enterprising millers to the west bank at the main falls.<sup>20</sup> Even before the race opened, a cotton factory was erected and equipped with spindles from Massachusetts;

<sup>14</sup> Invitation sent to Mrs. Abelard Reynolds, Dec. 16, 1815, Harris MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>15</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, June 3, 1815, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 190-192. Scrantom reports that with the aid of two helpers he was able to grind 50 to 150 bushels a day. His earnings now amounted to \$450 or \$500 a year for himself and his son, Elbert.

<sup>16</sup> Motley, "Romance of Milling," p. 172; Turpin C. Bannister, "Early Town Planning in New York State," *New York History*, XXIV (April, 1943), 186-195.

<sup>17</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Oct. 18, 1814. A store opened in Frankfort during the war advertised a quantity of liquors, teas, American factory gingham, griststones, and a few books including several copies of the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*.

<sup>18</sup> Blake McKelvey, "On the Educational Frontier," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 10.

<sup>19</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 28, Dec. 10, 1816; see Dr. Brown's obituary, *Democrat*, Dec. 30, 31, 1851.

<sup>20</sup> *Laws of the State of New York in Relation to the Erie and Champlain*



the timely arrival of several trained operatives made it possible to start work the next spring.<sup>21</sup>

East of the river speculative ventures gave place to practical developments with the return of peace. Samuel J. Andrews, brother-in-law of Atwater of Canandaigua, arrived to take charge of their joint enterprise on the Genesee in 1815, erecting the first stone building in the settlement at the top of the hill overlooking the bridge (corner of St. Paul and Main streets). There the pioneer store on the east bank opened in 1816. Andrews likewise found time to supervise the construction of mills at the main falls and to lay the foundations for a fine home overlooking the river halfway to the bridge.<sup>22</sup> The work of clearing the land, improving the roads, and erecting these and other buildings attracted additional settlers. Soon the community at the east end of the bridge, included within the town of Brighton as set off from Boyle in 1814, organized Brighton District No. 4, and erected a small schoolhouse where Clinton and Mortimer streets cross today.<sup>23</sup>



The dominance of the Rochester settlement over these close neighbors and the surrounding territory was favored in a limited respect by its post office, the records of which likewise provide a rough measure of the community's growth. Before Reynolds' appointment as postmaster late in 1812, residents of the lower Genesee had frequently gone to Canandaigua, Bloomfield, or Avon for their letters.<sup>24</sup> Though a post office

*Canals* (Albany, 1825), I, 315-316. Matthew Brown, Jr. and Francis Brown in a report to Myron Holley give the following figures:

Men's labour 1535 days at 62 ½ cts.	\$959 37
Team's labour 312 do. 50 cts.	156 00
Do. by contract,	100 00
Mason's work by contract, laying dry wall,	55 00
Blacksmith's bills, repairing tools, &c.	142 43
13 kegs of powder, at \$14	182 00
Tools worn out and destroyed, say	25 00
Use of carts and waggons,	40 00
Subsistence for men at 16s. per week, the common price for boarding,	435 00
Subsistence for teams at 16s. per week,	90 00
Add for work done by contract, on a part of the canal, the nature of the work the same,	1,300 00
Superintending six months, say	383 39
Amount of the whole expenditure,	\$3,868 19

<sup>21</sup> John Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences of the Pioneers of Rochester and Western New York*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>22</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 226-228; X, 185; XI, 284.

<sup>23</sup> Blake McKelvey, "Educational Frontier," p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ontario Repository*, July 11, Oct. 10, 1809, July 3, 1810. A dozen or so letters for residents in Boyle are advertised by the postmasters of the above villages on these dates.

opened in Boyle [Pittsford] in 1811<sup>25</sup> served the settlers at the falls for a time, the office on the site of the Reynolds Arcade soon became the chief postal depot for this area. Mail collections for the last quarter of 1813 amounted to only \$10.37, and a year later to only \$19.40, but the same period in 1816 brought in \$171.93, nearly an eightfold growth in two years.<sup>26</sup> One third of the receipts<sup>27</sup> went to the rider who carried the mail by horseback from Canandaigua to Rochester irregularly before 1815, when semi-weekly deliveries and soon a stage wagon were introduced.<sup>28</sup>

Rochester's central position was moderately strengthened by road construction during these years. A Rochester Turnpike Company was organized to improve the highway from Canandaigua, while repairs on the road west to Lewiston were likewise undertaken.<sup>29</sup> The East River Road, opened northward from the bridge over Honeoye Creek to the bridge at Rochester, connected the latter village with the older settlements to the south. Despite a grant of authority to open a road from Rochester to Batavia and the application for a state road to the head of the Allegany River,<sup>30</sup> for several years Rochester's only route to the southwest was by way of Scottsville and the old state road. The condition of these forest highways, obstructed by innumerable stumps and miry bogs, was accepted as a matter of course by the villagers who used them to tap the commercial resources of the hinterland. The scattered farmers eagerly made the best of the facilities available.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, the more important local trade artery of the day—the Genesee River—was depositing an enlarged volume of produce on Rochester's doorstep. Logging and rafting down the river had increased

<sup>25</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Oct. 22, 1811; Charles H. True, "Pittsford Town Records," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VIII, 125.

<sup>26</sup> Abelard Reynolds, Post Office Receipts, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>27</sup> E. R. Foreman, "Post Offices and Postmasters of Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XII, 56, 57. Until 1816 the rates on domestic letters were: "For each piece of paper of which a single letter or letter packet may be composed, under forty miles, 8 cents; under 90 miles 10 cents; under 150 miles, 12 ½ cents; under 300 miles, 17 cents; under 500 miles, 20 cents; over 500 miles, 25 cents." For thirty years after 1816 the rates were: "For each letter weighing less than half an ounce, if carried less than 300 miles, 5 cents; over 300 miles, 10 cents; each additional half ounce, double rates; drop letters delivered from the office where posted, 2 cents."

<sup>28</sup> William F. Peck, *Semi-Centennial History of Rochester*, pp. 92-93; Carrier Receipts, 1814, 1815, MSS, Reynolds Coll.

<sup>29</sup> N. Y. *Laws of 1814*, ch. 199; *Laws of 1815*, ch. 31; *Ontario Repository*, May 2, Aug. 1, 1815; Daniel Cruger to Col. Rochester, Marcellus, N. Y., Apr. 3, 1815, Rochester Letters, tells of a second turnpike company incorporated to open a road from Skaneateles to Palmyra, whence a road already extended to Rochester.

<sup>30</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 2, 1815; Mar. 25, 1817.

<sup>31</sup> E. P. Clapp, "Trade and Transportation in Western New York," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc., pp. 143-144, tells of a Chili farmer who recalled the early sixteen-mile trips to market made with a yoke of oxen and 32 to 35 bushels of wheat, returning in 20 weary hours.

steadily during the war years, while the renewal of Canadian trade—emphasized by the sudden jump in the price of wheat to \$2.50 a bushel in 1815 and of flour to \$15 a barrel—further stimulated the growth of river commerce.<sup>32</sup> By 1816 Rochester was recognized as the principal grain market of western New York, where, despite the “cold summer” of 1816 and the tedious labor of plowing, harvesting and threshing, wheat was becoming a major crop.<sup>33</sup> Frequent advertisements by lower Genesee merchants for ashes and staves likewise encouraged the flow of these forest products down the river.<sup>34</sup>

So profitable had this water traffic become that partially enclosed scows now made their appearance among the open rafts. Provided with a low cabin at both ends and with cleated running boards along the sides for the “shovers” to walk with their poles, these Durham boats, patterned after those on the Mohawk,<sup>35</sup> made frequent round trips during the Genesee high-water seasons of spring and fall. By 1820 the number of such boats, staffed by regular crews of from four to seven boatmen, numbered eight or ten.<sup>36</sup> Except during the dry season, these well-built craft were able to make their way down from Mount Morris, occasionally even from Dansville, over the rapids above Rochester to unload just south of the upper falls. No settlement on the New York frontier, except Buffalo, had a better trade feeder,<sup>37</sup> while Buffalo lacked an easy means for transshipment to Eastern or Canadian markets.

Rochester's major trade asset of the day was not the river but the vast lake a few miles north. The Canadian market was not only greatly expanded, but its merchants, enjoying empire preference abroad, were not as yet ready to enforce mercantile restrictions against American producers inland. Canada's interior merchants, faced with the sudden decline in their share of the fur trade, were eager to participate in the growing lumber and produce trade.<sup>38</sup> Soon a fleet of sixty sailing craft, probably none of them much over a hundred tons' capacity, were busily engaged in the commerce of Lake Ontario.<sup>39</sup> In 1818 an average of fifteen vessels a day passed down the St. Lawrence during a six weeks' period.<sup>40</sup> The Genesee port, outlet for the growing produce of a rich

<sup>32</sup> Clapp, “Trade and Transportation,” p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Clapp, “Trade and Transportation,” pp. 135, 142; Sophia Webster Lloyd, “Recollections of Pioneer Life in Western New York,” MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>34</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 5, May 1, Oct. 24, Nov. 28, 1815.

<sup>35</sup> Clapp, “Trade and Transportation,” pp. 38-48.

<sup>36</sup> Clapp, “Trade and Transportation,” pp. 150-152.

<sup>37</sup> N. Y. State Conservation Comm., *Report on the Watershed of the Genesee* (Albany, 1912), pp. 14-18.

<sup>38</sup> Creighton, *Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence: 1760-1850*, pp. 172-174.

<sup>39</sup> Clapp, “Trade and Transportation,” p. 135; Capt. James Van Cleve, “Reminiscences of Early Sailing on Lake Ontario,” MS, Buffalo Hist. Soc.

<sup>40</sup> Van Cleve, “Reminiscences,” p. 65; *Laws in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 473.

valley, made an increasing contribution to this commerce, in which boats of local construction played a part.<sup>41</sup> Even from the southeast, merchants were bringing the produce of the older towns of the Finger Lakes to the Genesee and other lake ports rather than pay the heavy freight rates for the long haul to Albany.<sup>42</sup> Genesee shipments were, as a result, bounding upward in the first years of peace,<sup>43</sup> to the great benefit of each of the lower Genesee settlements.



The thriving commerce brought new life to both Charlotte and Fall Town, where several of the merchants who had withdrawn during the war now returned. The old Hanford store at the landing was reopened by two of the younger brothers,<sup>44</sup> while Frederick Hanford associated himself with Oliver Culver in trading activities between Brighton and Fall Town, soon engaging a fleet of five boats in the enterprise.<sup>45</sup> Gideon King's younger sons, Bradford and Moses, who had been taken back to Suffield by their widowed mother two decades before, now returned as young men to build homes on the Ridge and promote the sale of their remaining lands.<sup>46</sup> The prospect of a settlement on the opposite bank prompted Frederick Hanford to seek control of the ferry on the lower Genesee in 1818, but meanwhile he was not neglecting to make judicious investments at the upper falls.<sup>47</sup>

As the fortunes of Charlotte at the river's mouth had been more seriously injured by the war, few of its earlier merchants returned. George Clinton Latta was a notable exception—first as the local representative of the firm of Bushnell and Latta, and later on his own account—directing many of the trading operations of the lower Genesee.<sup>48</sup> Samuel Currier, former tavern keeper at Charlotte, served for a

<sup>41</sup> Hosea Rogers, quoted in R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 101-103; Annah B. Yates, "Early Rochester Family Records," No. XLVII, *Post-Express*, May 27, 1911; Van Cleve, "Reminiscences," pp. 150-151. Van Cleve gives the names of five sailing vessels built on the Genesee in 1818.

<sup>42</sup> *Ontario Repository*, July 14, 1818; Hibernicus [DeWitt Clinton], *Letters on the Natural History and Internal Resources of the State of New York* (New York, 1822), p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 7, 1817; Aug. 11, 1818. Nearly 5,000 barrels of flour were shipped from the Genesee in the last two and a half months of the 1816 season, while 21,000 barrels were shipped during the first half of the 1818 season.

<sup>44</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Sept. 12, 1815.

<sup>45</sup> Oliver Culver Papers, MSS, Nos. 4, 8, University of Rochester; see the sketch of Culver's career, *Union*, Aug. 16, 1852.

<sup>46</sup> *Telegraph*, Nov. 28, 1818; Sept. 4, 1821.

<sup>47</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 28, 1816; Mar. 17, 1818; Genesee County Deeds, Liber II, 418, 434-440.

<sup>48</sup> George Clinton Latta Papers, MSS, Univ. Rochester; R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 248-250; "Reminiscences of George C. Latta," in Annah B. Yates, "Early Rochester Family Records," Nos. XLVI-XLVII, *Post Express*, May 20, 27, 1911.

time as a boat captain, though his discouraging record of burying six wives in almost as many years not only drove him to apparent suicide, but revealed the numerous hazards that still surrounded the lower Genesee settlers.<sup>49</sup> Frequent lake storms occasionally caught one or more of the small schooners far from port with disastrous results for their crews,<sup>50</sup> yet the trade of the lake and of the lower Genesee enjoyed steady growth.<sup>51</sup>

Even more marked was the increasing strength and number of the lower Genesee settlements. Old Northampton and Northfield, long since renamed Gates and Boyle respectively, had by 1817 been broken into nine townships. West of the river, Gates was already backed by Riga, Ogden, Parma, and Murray; while on the east side, in place of Boyle stood Brighton, Pittsford, Perinton, and Penfield; still the process of township reorganization was scarcely half completed.<sup>52</sup> The story was one of rapid growth. The area of these townships, later organized as Monroe County, which in 1810 had contained but 4,683 persons, numbered 11,178 by 1814, and more than doubled during the next five years, reaching 27,288 by 1820. Gates on the west bank of the Genesee numbered 2,643 in 1820, while Brighton had 1,972, not counting a settlement of Indian families still encamped along the ridge between the bay and the river.<sup>53</sup> Together these two townships had enjoyed a threefold growth since the close of the war.<sup>54</sup>

#### THE INCORPORATION OF ROCHESTERVILLE

The chief advantage from the lower Genesee's commercial and population growth was to be derived not at the rival shipping docks, nor at the crossroads settlements scattered round about,<sup>55</sup> but at the upper falls. There much of the grain was turned into flour, the logs into building materials, while other products of the valley were prepared for

<sup>49</sup> Dorothy S. Truesdale, "The Marriages and Bereavements of Captain Samuel Currier," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 201-203.

<sup>50</sup> *Repository*, Nov. 7, 14, 1815. The *Julia* was wrecked off Pulteneyville on Oct. 24, and all lives lost. The newly developed "safe and convenient harbor at Pultney Ville" had proved beyond her reach when the storm broke. *Repository*, Apr. 4, 1815; *Telegraph*, Oct. 3, 1820.

<sup>51</sup> *Repository*, Jan. 7, 1817; Leonard Stoneburner, Shipping Accounts, Autograph Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Chilton Williamson, "New York's Impact on the Canadian Economy," *New York History*, XXIV (1943), 43, *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 303-320; VIII, 126-127.

<sup>53</sup> Harris MSS, No. 65A, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>54</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting that as late as 1820 the large townships of Penfield and Riga each exceeded the population of Gates, and that the millers on Irondequoit Creek in the first named town were still confident rivals of Rochester. N. Y. *Census* (1855), p. xxiii; Grace Raymond, "Penfield Pioneers," MS; Lucy F. Gay "Pioneer Life in Riga," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

distant markets. Farmers and merchants, coming in from the surrounding territory to unload, made the village an ideal market town, and many merchants from the older Genesee settlements quickly transferred all or part of their activities to this more favored location. Soon village incorporation was achieved, and the fundamental community functions were provided. The eleventh-hour challenge of a new rival at the lower falls was lightly tossed aside when the Erie Canal was routed across the Genesee at the upper falls.

The actual details of its incorporation were possibly the easiest and simplest of the many steps necessary to the establishment of the village. The application for a village charter, made to the legislature early in 1817, was formulated by a local committee and carried to Albany by Colonel Rochester himself.<sup>56</sup> On March 21st the act passed, incorporating the village of Rochester in the County of Genesee.<sup>57</sup> A generous tract of 655 acres on the west bank of the Genesee, including Colonel Rochester's hundred acres, the two hundred acres of Frankfort, and room for expansion north, south, and west, was set off within Gates township for the new village. Though the existence of an earlier Rochester post village in Ulster County may have prompted the adoption of the name Rochester, the settlement, which had for some time used the shorter name, continued to do so in non-legal affairs. Among the approximately seven hundred residents, possibly a hundred adult males (who had lived in the county during the preceding six months as freeholders to the value of twenty pounds, or as renters to the value of forty shillings, and who had been rated and paid taxes to the state) assembled at the schoolhouse on the first Monday of May, 1817, to choose the seventeen village officers specified in the charter.<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately, Rochester's incorporation was marred by an unhappy but spirited village quarrel. The general rejoicing which greeted the news of incorporation stopped suddenly when the merchants prepared a slate of candidates excluding all mechanics. Some of the latter angrily rallied their fellows behind a ticket dominated by their own candidates, and in the election which followed the mechanics—as workmen were then known—carried the day.<sup>59</sup> It was the merchants' turn to feel in-

<sup>56</sup> Roswell Babbit in behalf of the Village Incorporation Committee to Col. Rochester, Rochester, Jan. 23, 1817; Enos Pomeroy to Col. Rochester, Rochester, Mar. 20, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>57</sup> *N. Y. Laws of 1817*, ch. 96.

<sup>58</sup> W. Earl Weller, "The Development of the Charter of the City of Rochester: 1817-1938," *M. A. thesis, Univ. Roch.* (1938), pp. 13-17; *Records of the Doings and Votes of the Inhabitants of the Village of Rochester*, May 5, 1817.

<sup>59</sup> *Records of the Doings . . . of the Inhabitants . . . of Rochester*, May 5, 1817. The trustees elected were Daniel Mack, William Cobb, Everard Peck, Jehiel Barnard, and Francis Brown, and at least Brown could hardly be classed as a "mechanic."

dignant, and rumor said that they were discharging the mechanics responsible for the opposition. News of the untoward development, soon reaching Colonel Rochester on his Bloomfield estate, prompted a letter full of sound advice to Dr. Matthew Brown:

I would rather have sacrificed \$500 than that such an event should have happened. . . . I have constantly endeavored to impress it on the inhabitants to harmonize among themselves as well as with the inhabitants of the neighboring village of Carthage in order to make it all one place. . . . It will be pleasing to the enemies of Rochester, and you know she has a great number who envy her growing consequence. I must entreat that you and Esquire Mastick will endeavor to heal the wound before it becomes an ulcer.<sup>60</sup>

Apparently the threat of strife was averted and harmony restored, for the progress of the settlement continued. The close accord which had drawn the two settlements west of the river into one village was matched by a like coöperation with the developments at the east end of the bridge. There Enos Stone at last agreed to sell the central portion of his farm—minus a dozen choice lots already disposed of—to Elisha Johnson of Canandaigua.<sup>61</sup>

Johnson, who with his partner, Orson Seymour, paid \$10,000 for the eighty-acre purchase, moved his family to the falls in May, 1817.<sup>62</sup> Soon the tract was surveyed into village lots with a gridiron street plan and a Main Street leading down to the bridge where it joined with Buffalo Street on the other side. Though a petition for the inclusion of the eastern settlement within the Rochesterville limits produced no action from the legislature, possibly because of its location in a separate county,<sup>63</sup> other measures of coöperation were steadily advanced. Thus Elisha Johnson's plan, calling for a wing dam to assure a steady supply of water for his east side raceway, was soon revised by agreement with the Rochester proprietors to extend the dam across the river so as to serve both the east and west races at the upper falls.<sup>64</sup> Work on the joint projects ultimately cost Johnson and Seymour \$12,000 and laid the foundation for later disputes, but meanwhile the settlers on both sides

<sup>60</sup> Col. Rochester to Dr. Brown, May 9, 1817; Brown to Rochester, May 15, 1817, MSS, Ontario Hist. Soc., Canandaigua, N. Y.

<sup>61</sup> Ontario County Deeds, Liber 28, p. 98; *Ontario Repository*, Feb. 10, 1818, Johnson and Seymour advertise 220 village lots and 40 water rights for sale; "Elisha Johnson" in *Post Express*, Apr. 14, 1893; Aug. 25, 1894. See Osgood Collection, MSS, III, 50.

<sup>62</sup> Elisha Johnson to Col. Rochester, Rochester, May 16, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>63</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 20, 1818. The petition, dated Dec. 9, 1817, was signed by Samuel Andrews and William Atkinson representing East Rochester, and John Mastick and Libbeus Elliott for Rochesterville.

<sup>64</sup> Elisha Johnson to Col. Rochester, Rochester, May 16, 1817; Rochester Letters.

gathered for a picnic on July 4, 1817, blasting rock from the Johnson race as a practical celebration of the day.<sup>65</sup>

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There were many reasons for rejoicing at the upper falls that year. Within the past eighteen months more than a score of stores and other shops had located in the village, while new ventures had been launched by several of the earlier arrivals. A tannery, a brickyard, and the *Weekly Gazette*, Rochester's first paper, all made their appearance in 1816.<sup>66</sup> A new gristmill was constructed east of the river on Johnson's race by young William Atkinson in 1817, while Colonel Rochester's second son, John, took charge of a sawmill on the west bank.<sup>67</sup> Already a second bookstore, opened by young Everard Peck from Connecticut, was displaying a sideline of wall paper.<sup>68</sup> An enterprising drygoods merchant must have been filling numerous orders for the white paint that provided the sparkling appearance noted by travelers.<sup>69</sup>

A group of variously trained professional men were attracted to the village by the prospect of growing up with the community. Thus a young medic from the East described Rochester as "a delightful village . . . surrounded by woods, [containing] many elegant buildings . . . and rapidly increasing—but no place for me. There are eight physicians in the village, six more than it can support."<sup>70</sup> Somebody should have advised Dr. Collar that several of his professional brethren were pre-occupied with town-lot speculation and other village affairs. Neither Dr. Matthew Brown nor Dr. Levi Ward found much time for the care of the sick, while Dr. Frederick F. Backus was busy with the establishment of the first drug store. There was still ample room for enterprising professionals in Rochester, as young Moses Chapin, a law student from the East, demonstrated when he put up his shingle in spite of the six lawyers already located in the village.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Scramont, "Old Citizen's Letters," Scrapbook, Roch. Hist. Soc., p. 30.

<sup>66</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 2, May 12, Apr. 23, June 18, Dec. 3, 1816.

<sup>67</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, X, 180; John C. Rochester to Col. Rochester, Nov. 7, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>68</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 1, 1817.

<sup>69</sup> Frances Wright, *Views of Society and Manners in America*, p. 165; Ashley Samson in *Rochester Daily Union*, Mar. 29, 1855, reminisces of his first visit to Rochester in 1817: "I came upon quite a cluster of neat-looking buildings, mostly painted white . . . surrounded on all sides by dense forests, many of the dwelling houses being without cellars or underpinnings, resting upon blocks of wood."

<sup>70</sup> William B. Collar to his parents, Wyoming, N. Y., June 7, 1817, typed copy, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>71</sup> Oswald P. Backus, Jr., "History of the Monroe County Court," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 198; "Frederick F. Backus," in F. B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College* (New Haven, 1912), VI, 520-521, and "Moses Chapin," VI, 376-378; Rev. A. G. Hall, *A Discourse Delivered at the Funeral of Moses Chapin* (Rochester, 1865); [Henry M. Ward], "Dr. Levi Ward, Jr.," *Memorials of a Grandparent and Parents* (n.d.). Though generally referred to as Dr. Levi



So bright were the prospects of Rochesterville that the aged proprietor was becoming impatient to make the long-deferred removal to the falls.<sup>72</sup> The contrasting trends in land values must have impressed Colonel Rochester, for the Bloomfield estate he had bought in 1814 for \$12,000 was assuming the character of a frozen asset, while the No. 1 lot in the village, sold to Henry Skinner in 1811 for \$200, already exceeded \$12,000 in value when purchased by Azel and Russell Ensworth in January, 1817. The Ensworths soon erected a fine new tavern on their choice lot at the Four Corners, providing accommodations for the numerous travelers now brought to the village three times a week by the Canandaigua-Lewiston stage. Not only the regular stage wagons,<sup>73</sup> but also a variety of one-horse dearborns, Dutch or light Jersey wagons, slow but sturdy ox carts, and great covered wagons were transporting travelers and settlers westward in an ever increasing stream. One estimate placed the number of families that crossed Rochester bridge in the summer of 1816 at one thousand.<sup>74</sup>

Since the necessity for keeping in close touch with these developments brought the proprietors on frequent visits to the falls, the desire for a free hand in their projects prompted a division of the joint holdings in the summer of 1816. Rochester, Fitzhugh, and Carroll each received fifty-odd lots from the unsold portion of the tract, together with an equal share of water privileges, while each agreed to contribute to the expense of building and repairing the raceway and dam in proportion to the number of mills to be erected on his lots.<sup>75</sup>

A congenial but diversified community life was taking shape. The modest frame structure, erected early in 1817 by the Presbyterians, supplied the first meeting house, facilitating the work of the pioneer resident pastor, the Reverend Comfort Williams, who had arrived the year before.<sup>76</sup> Episcopal, Quaker, Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic residents held services from time to time, though only the first three groups established regular societies before the end of 1818, by which date a Sabbath school and missionary society had also appeared.<sup>77</sup> The first

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Ward, Jr., during the twenties, the Jr. is not used in this account, and the same holds for Dr. Matthew Brown.

<sup>72</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 30, Feb. 27, 1816; Rochester Letters for 1816 and 1817.

<sup>73</sup> John M. Duncan, *Traveler through Part of the United States and Canada in 1818-1819* (Glasgow, 1823), II, 5-6, gives a description of a stage wagon on the Genesee Road. Dr. Azel Ensworth obituary, *Democrat*, May 8, 1854.

<sup>74</sup> Lieut. Francis Hall, *Travels in Canada and the United States in 1816 and 1817* (London, 1818), pp. 194-195.

<sup>75</sup> Agreement dated, July 6, 1816, and deed of partition, Aug. 13, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>76</sup> Robinson, *First Church Chronicles*, pp. 23-25; Dexter, *Graduates of Yale*, VI, 233-234; Charles M. Williams, *The Rev. Comfort Williams* [Rochester, 1910].

<sup>77</sup> Annah B. Yates, "First Church Chronicles," R. H. S., *Pub.*, I, 211; Orlo J.

local Masonic lodge organized in the summer of 1817,<sup>78</sup> about the same time that the first village band formed.<sup>79</sup> Evening parties lasting from six to eleven and afternoon teas (in one instance forty ladies gathered to welcome an out-of-town sister) supplied social pleasures, particularly agreeable during the winter season when good sleighing added to the merriment.<sup>80</sup> Occasional weddings afforded more festive ceremonies, as when young Gerrit Smith, just out of Hamilton College, came to Rochester to marry Wealthea Ann Backus, daughter of Hamilton's president, who was stopping at the time with her brother, the leading physician and sole druggist of the village.<sup>81</sup>

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The first visit of the *Ontario*, pioneer American steamboat on the Great Lakes,<sup>82</sup> early in April, 1817, brought a fresh surge of enthusiasm to the lower Genesee settlers. The visit was hailed as the promise of a new day for the trade of the area, yet there must have been a feeling of concern among the Rochester merchants who rode or strolled down to the lower falls on that occasion. However one proceeded, it was a long jaunt down from the bridge, or back again, and would travelers and shippers continue to make the trip? The fortunes of Fall Town and Charlotte, dimmed by the war, had remained dependent upon Rochester, through which their trade with the interior settlements must necessarily pass. But now a new settlement appeared on the east bank at the lower

Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XII, 247-248; Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 290, 291.

<sup>78</sup> O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 316.

<sup>79</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen Letters," Nos. 2-8, Scrapbook, Roch. Hist. Soc., pp. 3-7, 8-9.

<sup>80</sup> Esther Maria Ward to Mrs. Mehitabel Ward, Rochester, Feb. 10, 1817, "Diaries and Letters of Esther Maria Ward Chapin: 1815-1823," pp. 21, 25, 233, typescript, Roch. Hist. Soc. "We on Friday had a pleasant party of about forty five who came in at six and retired at eleven. . . . I have formed some very pleasant acquaintances since I have been here altho I have not been out at all. We think of visiting Mrs. Bond one evening this week. It is very lively in Rochester at present and Mr. Smith thinks it will not be consistent with his business to visit Bergen this week, altho S. wishes it very much. If my parents have no objection to my spending a fortnight or three weeks longer in Rochester I shall feel grateful for the indulgence. If they think it will not be consistent I shall with pleasure evince my gratitude for their indulgence so far in cheerfully submitting to their wishes by returning to Bergen whenever they may think proper."

<sup>81</sup> Octavius B. Frothingham, *Gerrit Smith* (New York, 1878), p. 27.

<sup>82</sup> Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, XXIV, 296. The *Ontario* was built in Sacketts Harbor late in 1816, about the same time the Canadians were building the *Frontenac*, and both claimed the honor of being the first steamboat on the lake in 1817. A year later the *Walk-in-the-Water* appeared on Lake Erie. Capt. James Van Cleve, "Reminiscences of Early Vessels, Steamboats and Propellers on Lake Ontario," Harris Coll., No. 185, contains an extract which describes the *Ontario* as 110 foot deck, 24 foot beam, 8½ foot depth of hold, two masts and side wheel engine. See the sketch of the boat by Van Cleve, its clerk for several years after 1826.

falls, and its promoters boldly predicted a great future for their town, named after ancient Carthage.

Despite its tardy development, the east bank of the Genesee at the lower falls possessed real advantages as a town site. The river flats in the gorge above the second cataract of the lower falls offered convenient mill sites on the eastern side of the river, while a suitable harbor was available on the same side (a half-mile south of Fall Town across the gorge) thus bringing the dock within reasonable reach of the mills. The extension of the state road north along present Franklin and St. Paul Streets, together with the newly opened road along the old Indian trail from Irondequoit Landing, provided excellent trade connections with the more populous settlements to the southeast. Indeed, it was from the older towns of Ontario County that the promoters of Carthage hailed, and their confidence in the future of the settlement as an independent rival of Rochester, which it might soon hope to overshadow, was stimulated by the favorable prospects of Lewiston, similarly located by former Canandaiguans at the head of lake shipping on the Niagara River.<sup>83</sup>

A land company, formed by Elisha B. Strong and several Canandaigua associates, undertook the Carthage development on a tract of one thousand acres overlooking the lower falls. Elisha Johnson, busy with his own development at the upper falls, was engaged to lay out the town plat early in 1817. With the construction of a warehouse at the river's edge as well as a tavern and store on the bank above already begun,<sup>84</sup> Strong moved down from Canandaigua to assume active leadership of the settlement, erecting a sawmill and a gristmill at the brink of the second cataract.<sup>85</sup> As additional settlers arrived, Brighton District No. 8 was organized, and a school opened in rented quarters.<sup>86</sup>

Yet it was thought the settlement could only achieve its full destiny by bridging the deep gorge and routing the Canandaigua-Lewiston traffic over the river at this point. Accordingly the founders of Carthage organized a bridge company late in 1817 to undertake the bold project as a direct challenge to Rochester.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately for Carthage, the bridge proved more of a problem than its promoters had foreseen, and meanwhile, before it could be put to the test, an even more daring undertaking, the long debated Erie Canal, was decided upon and routed across the Genesee at Rochester, thus assuring that village commercial supremacy in the area.

<sup>83</sup> Susan H. Hooker, "The Rise and Fall of Carthage," *R. H. S., Pub.*, II, 205-208; E. H. Hooker, "Memories of Carthage," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XI, 231-235.

<sup>84</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Mar. 11, 25, May 20, Aug. 5, Sept. 9, 1817.

<sup>85</sup> Hooker, "Memories of Carthage," p. 233; Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, pp. 38-39; Dexter, *Biographical Sketches*, VI, 281-282.

<sup>86</sup> School District No. 8, Carthage, Minute Book, Apr. 8, 1817-Oct. 3, 1843, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>87</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 16, 1817.

## THE CANAL ASSURES LEADERSHIP TO ROCHESTER

Talk of a western water route had been recurrent in New York for nearly a century before the ambitious canal was undertaken. As early as 1724, Cadwallader Colden in a report to the king on the Indian trade had remarked on the network of creeks and rivers that facilitated canoe trade between the Hudson and the Great Lakes.<sup>88</sup> More or less specific proposals for the improvement of these routes had appeared from time to time,<sup>89</sup> and the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company's projects of the last years of the eighteenth century had sought to join and improve the upper branches of the Mohawk and Oswego Rivers.<sup>90</sup> But it was not until the westward movement scattered settlers across the state that the idea of an artificial waterway direct to Lake Erie appeared.<sup>91</sup> When the legislature in 1808 authorized a preliminary canal survey, the

<sup>88</sup> Cadwallader Colden, "Memorial Concerning the Fur Trade of the Province of New York," 1724, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada* (London, 1747), Section II, pp. 33-35.

<sup>89</sup> In 1768, Gov. Sir Henry Moore suggested to the assembly the advisability of improving the Mohawk in order to facilitate the fur trade. The petitions of Christopher Colles from 1784 to 1786 involved the improvement of the Mohawk, Wood Creek, and Onondaga River route to Lake Ontario. In 1786, Jeffrey Smith introduced a resolution also aimed at the improvement of this route. A few years later Elkanah Watson, on a journey to Seneca Lake, was inspired by the idea of a canal connecting the Onondaga salt springs with Wood Creek and the Mohawk. In January, 1791, Gov. George Clinton recommended the improvement of the Mohawk and a survey was made. Gen. Philip Schuyler was instrumental in pushing through the chartering of the Western Inland Lock Navigation Co., and thought that the charter should extend to Seneca Lake. Gouverneur Morris about 1800 urged a water communication with Lake Erie, probably by way of Lake Ontario, although it has been asserted that he referred to an overland route. Noble E. Whitford, *History of the Canal System of the State of New York* (Albany, 1906), I, 20-32, 51-54; Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, II, 232-240.

<sup>90</sup> "The Inland Lock Navigation Company: First Report of the Directors and Engineer" (New York, 1796) in Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, II, 157-180.

<sup>91</sup> Gouverneur Morris' suggestion for the overland route is open to doubt. In 1792, the Rev. Francis Adrian Vanderkemp in a letter to Col. Adam G. Mappa, dated Kingston, July 13, refers in flowery language to the possibility of water communication from the Hudson to Lake Erie—apparently by means of a series of canals connecting natural streams and creeks. "Extracts from the Vanderkemp Papers," Buffalo Hist. Soc., *Pub.*, II, 39-41. Philip Schuyler and William Weston, engineer for the Inland Lock Navigation Company, are asserted to have "frequently talked of water communication by means of canals as far as Lake Erie, keeping the interior so as to avoid Niagara Falls" as early as 1797. Jesse Hawley claimed that he first suggested the overland route in 1805, but it was 1807 before his first essay on the subject appeared in the *Commonwealth* at Pittsburgh, Pa., and Oct. 27 of that year when the first of his essays in the *Genesee Messenger* of Canandaigua appeared. A few months later, in the legislative session of 1807-1808, Joshua Forman introduced a resolution for a survey of an overland route. Whitford, I, 51-57.

overland route was only included as an afterthought in the assignment given James Geddes, the surveyor.<sup>92</sup>

On his return from the survey of a possible route around Niagara Falls to connect Lakes Erie and Ontario, Geddes in December, 1808, tramped over the snow-covered hills east of the Genesee, seeking the water summit that an overland canal skirting south of Lake Ontario would have to cross. Much to his surprise, the problem was not one of a summit but of the deep Irondequoit Valley.<sup>93</sup> Even here he was excited to find a series of strange gravel hills which could, he thought, be bridged together to carry the canal from the Genesee level east to Palmyra, from which point a natural channel had been prepared by some kind Providence. The survey revealed what appeared to be a fortuitous succession of levels, permitting a gradual descent from Lake Erie to the Genesee, to the Montezuma Marshes, to the Mohawk, and finally to the Hudson.<sup>94</sup> It presented a breath-taking opportunity which quickly took hold of the legislature, and a commission was created in 1810 to follow up the preliminary study.<sup>95</sup> When DeWitt Clinton, one of the commissioners, came west that year, full advantage was taken of the occasion to make careful observations of trade prospects on the lower Genesee.<sup>96</sup>

Though the War of 1812 shelved the canal project for the time, it likewise provided such a profitable market for the products of the Genesee that the return of peace and the loss of army orders intensified the demand for a trade outlet. The stream of new settlers in 1815 created a local market for food and other provisions, while those areas enjoying easy access to the Canadian market—notably the vicinity of Oswego, the lower Genesee, and Lewiston<sup>97</sup>—experienced a rapid commercial growth; yet neither market promised a secure trade. The heavy charges of one hundred dollars for freighting a ton of produce by wagon or sled from Buffalo to Albany—a fifteen- or twenty-day trip under favorable circumstances—excluded all but the most valuable articles

<sup>92</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 13-38; *Dictionary of American Biography*, VII, 204-205.

<sup>93</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 28-29, 36-38. See the Geddes map, Plate III, No. 1.

<sup>94</sup> The Niagara escarpment west of the Genesee and the strange hills (drumlins and pinnacles) east of that river, as well as the remarkable natural channel east of Palmyra, began to attract increasing speculation at this time, but the correct explanation was not discovered until the mid-thirties, and the glacial theory expounded by Professor Louis Agassiz in the late thirties was not applied locally for another half century. See above, pp. 1-7.

<sup>95</sup> *Report of the Commissioners appointed by . . . the Senate and Assembly of the State of New York . . . to Explore the Route of an Inland Navigation from Hudson's River to Lake Ontario and Lake Erie* (N. Y., 1811).

<sup>96</sup> Campbell, *DeWitt Clinton*, pp. 112-113. See above, pp. 34-35.

<sup>97</sup> Spafford, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Albany, 1824), pp. 188-189, 281-282, 386.

from such traffic, denying an eastern market to the increasingly abundant products of forest, field, and orchard.<sup>98</sup>

A storm of petitions descended upon the legislature in 1816, not only from such hardy western settlements as Geneva, Canandaigua, Bloomfield, Avon, and Buffalo,<sup>99</sup> but also from the Mohawk Valley and from New York City as well.<sup>100</sup> Several regional conventions assembled to rally support for the canal, as when the leading merchants of the Genesee Country convened at Canandaigua for this purpose in January, 1817, with Colonel Nathaniel Rochester of Bloomfield as secretary.<sup>101</sup> The belief that the future of the state demanded the speedy construction of a trade artery into the West was gaining control of the legislature, and there no longer remained any doubt that the canal should extend overland to Lake Erie rather than by way of Lake Ontario. The growing strength of the interior settlements as well as the bloody conflict with Canada had settled that issue. Finally on April 15, 1817, an act authorizing the construction of the Erie Canal became law.<sup>102</sup>

Less than a month after its own incorporation, Rochester thus received what was in effect its economic charter. To be sure, the canal act did not determine either the exact route or the full extent of the projected trade artery, but geology had taken care of Rochester. Scarcely any other point on the entire route of the canal was so definitely fixed as the Genesee crossing. Geddes in his preliminary surveys and again in 1816 had located the crossing between the upper and main falls.<sup>103</sup> Later attempts to find a suitable point for a crossing near the more populous state road settlements twenty miles further south were destined to fail.<sup>104</sup> The forty-mile course of the Genesee through its wide flood plain south of Rochester made it impossible either to take the canal through the river at the latter's level without digging a deep and costly canal ditch, or to cross on an aqueduct at a sufficient height without building a long and impracticable embankment across the valley. Indeed, the only point where an aqueduct would be feasible was just below the upper falls; and if the crossing was to be made at the river level with the aid of a dam, as proposed in 1816 (and later effected in the Barge Canal), it would have to be located between those

<sup>98</sup> Hibernicus [DeWitt Clinton], *Letters on the Natural History and Internal Resources of the State of New York*, pp. 25, 27-29. The thought that the export of grain would relieve the necessity of converting that product into liquor was a weighty argument among those who sought a general moral uplift.

<sup>99</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 119-122; *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 23, 1816.

<sup>100</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 122-141, *passim*.

<sup>101</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 14, 1817.

<sup>102</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 273-278, 358-364.

<sup>103</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 28-29, 36-38, map facing pp. 38, 42-46, 145, 212-213.

<sup>104</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 452-453.

falls and the rapids two miles south.<sup>105</sup> If ever the canal should be completed so far west, Rochester was assured the advantages of the new trade artery.



The villagers themselves had not required even this assurance, so great was their confidence in the future of Rochester. The old forest trees were rapidly being cleared away, the swamp lands drained,<sup>106</sup> and building activities were progressing on all sides. The hundred-odd houses of 1816 increased to around 250 houses and shops within three years without satisfying the demand.<sup>107</sup> Colonel Rochester himself contracted for the erection of several two-story, four-room houses, approximately twenty by thirty feet in size and equipped with large double fireplaces. With the construction cost averaging \$300 per house, the builders were usually glad to receive land or lumber in payment.<sup>108</sup> Several lumber mills were kept busy sawing the logs on shares in lieu of cash.<sup>109</sup> Among other millers, Hamlet Scrantom, now in charge of the Red Mill,<sup>110</sup> kept the great millstones running day and night in an effort to handle the increasing product of the valley. The exports from the Genesee grew in proportion.<sup>111</sup>

But the skies were not always clear, and early in November, 1817, they were more than overcast. Several days of heavy rain up the valley produced swollen streams and converted the Genesee into a rushing torrent which swept down ominously upon Rochester. Though the villagers rallied to the task of throwing up an embankment along the raceway in an effort to secure the lowlands at the west end of the bridge from inundation, several buildings were quickly carried away. The Red Mill of Ely and Bissell was damaged, John C. Rochester's sawmill undermined, the head of Johnson's raceway torn out, and a flood of several inches depth spread over the flats back of the principal stores. Fortunately, the low west end of the bridge was saved, and altogether the damage proved to be less than at first expected.<sup>112</sup>

News of the flood spread quickly, while dissension as well as false

<sup>105</sup> *Laws . . . in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 61, 145, 212-213.

<sup>106</sup> *Doings . . . of the Inhabitants . . . of Rochester*, June 10, 1817.

<sup>107</sup> Francis Hall, *Travels in Canada and the United States*, p. 190; Frances Wright, *Views of Society*, p. 165.

<sup>108</sup> Contracts between Rochester and Nathaniel Bingham, Sept. 10, 1818, and between Rochester and Willis Kempshall, Dec. 29, 1818, Rochester Letters. See the floor plans attached to these contracts.

<sup>109</sup> Col. Rochester to Lyman Wait, lease, Oct. 15, 1818, Rochester Letters.

<sup>110</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to Abraham Scrantom, Jan. 24, 1819, R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 192.

<sup>111</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Aug. 11, 1818. Since the previous Apr. 1, the Port of Rochester had shipped 21,567 barrels of flour; 1,158 barrels of ashes; 569 barrels of pork; 158 casks of whiskey; and 120,000 double butt standard staves.

<sup>112</sup> Enos Pomeroy to Col. Rochester, Rochester, Nov. 5, 1817; John C. Rochester to Col. Rochester, Nov. 7, 10, 1817, Rochester Letters.

rumors threatened to do more serious injury than had the turbulent Genesee. Charles Carroll, writing from Williamsburg up the valley, blamed the flood on the Johnson dam, which had been raised a few inches higher than originally intended. "We have," he advised Colonel Rochester, "already in public estimation sustained irreparable injury by the report of the destruction. . . . And the more we suffer in the eyes of the Public, the better for Brighton. I have learnt enough of Yankees to dread & fear their wiles & offers. You are too honest and unsuspicious."<sup>113</sup>

But neither Colonel Rochester nor the villagers were disheartened. Indeed, both natural misfortunes and outside opposition served to weld a stronger community spirit. Thus, when repeated attempts to secure a bank charter were blocked,<sup>114</sup> Colonel Rochester frequently supplied the desired credit. On one occasion, when Ely and Company sought to raise \$20,000 for expansion, Colonel Rochester, much against the advice of his former partners, endorsed the note.<sup>115</sup> A similar unfaltering enterprise characterized the other principal men of the village. When a fire with which the local bucket brigade could not cope destroyed the Brown mills together with a stock of 4,500 bushels of wheat in May, 1818, the work of reconstruction was immediately undertaken. Despite an estimated loss of \$17,000, the village rallied to the support of Francis Brown and Company, and by the next January the millstones were again in operation in a four-story stone structure—the largest in the settlement.<sup>116</sup> The pioneer cotton factory, less successful in raising credit, suspended activities,<sup>117</sup> but cash was usually available when loads of grain, ashes, or lumber approached the village, or when the holder of a favorite lot finally consented to name his price. Indeed, the steady rise in lot values, in contrast with the trend in some older settlements, provided a sure sign of vitality.



The village was rapidly attaining a position of considerable influence in western New York. A second weekly newspaper, established in 1818, sought its main circulation among the scattered settlements up the valley.<sup>118</sup> A lower Genesee campaign for a new county with its seat at Rochester was blocked for the time,<sup>119</sup> but in the political flux which

<sup>113</sup> Charles Carroll to Col. Rochester, Williamsburg, Nov. 6, 9, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>114</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 26, 1815, Dec. 16, 1817.

<sup>115</sup> Articles of agreement between Nathaniel Rochester and Hervey Ely, Elisha Ely, and others, Aug. 1, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>116</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 5, 1818; *Rochester Telegraph*, Jan. 19, 1819.

<sup>117</sup> John Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>118</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Feb. 24, 1818, gave the first announcement of Peck's intentions; the first issue was the *Rochester Telegraph*, July 7, 1818.

<sup>119</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 24, Dec. 26, 1816, Sept. 30, Oct. 21, Nov. 4, 11, Dec. 16, 23, 1817, Jan. 6, 13, Sept. 8, Nov. 24, Dec. 15, 1818.



followed the disintegration of the Federalist party,<sup>120</sup> the Rochester interests, by throwing their support to such "regular" and "independent" candidates as favored the village, were able to control the election of Ontario and Genesee assemblymen.<sup>121</sup> Colonel Rochester, as a staunch Jeffersonian, stirred the ire of neighboring Federalists,<sup>122</sup> but the interests of his village, despite its Federalist leanings,<sup>123</sup> were doubtless safeguarded in Democratic Albany by the proprietor's partisanship.

Though Rochester's economic position was assured, in other respects the village could not yet rival several of the older settlements of western New York. The public buildings, academies, and elegant churches that graced Canandaigua, Buffalo, and Geneva, and to a lesser extent Bath, Geneseo, and Batavia, were lacking in Rochester, as were the occasional great houses surrounded by spacious gardens and blooming orchards which told of the comforts already enjoyed by a few families in these villages and in Bloomfield, Groveland, and other favored agricultural areas.<sup>124</sup> But these structures would come in time. Indeed Samuel J. Andrews, Dr. Matthew Brown, and Dr. Levi Ward were already building comfortable houses and surrounding them with broad gardens.<sup>125</sup> Most of the scattered log cabins with their mud and stick chimneys had disappeared, and the early frame shanties had been moved back to serve as stables, giving place to well-built houses and shops equipped with brick and stone fireplaces.

Rochester could not yet boast the distinguished personalities that attracted comment from visitors at several of the other villages.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, more than a half dozen of her residents, including the first minister, had enjoyed the benefits of a college education,<sup>127</sup> and these as well as many others were to be heard from in time. In fact, the village had much the character of a community that was yet to be heard from.

When Colonel Rochester finally moved to the falls in the spring of 1818, his stooped figure and white hair, tell-tale signs of his sixty-six years, marked him as the oldest inhabitant.<sup>128</sup> Two or three of his neigh-

<sup>120</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 29, 1817.

<sup>121</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 28, 1818. <sup>122</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 2, 1816.

<sup>123</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 10, 1814, May 9, 1815, May 7, 1816.

<sup>124</sup> Frances Wright, *Views of Society*, pp. 24-25; Osgood Coll. III, No. 84, Roch. Hist. Soc., describes several of these "great houses."

<sup>125</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 226, 277; VI, 131.

<sup>126</sup> Frances Wright, *Views of Society*, pp. 127, 130; Hibernicus [DeWitt Clinton], *Letters*, pp. 216-219.

<sup>127</sup> Dr. Frederick F. Backus, Moses Chapin, Joseph Spencer, Elisha B. Strong, Dr. Levi Ward, and the Reverend Comfort Williams were Yale graduates, while Elisha Johnson and Ashley Sampson held degrees from Williams and Middlebury respectively.

<sup>128</sup> Nathaniel Rochester, "Autobiography," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 312.

bors had reached their fifties, and a few more their forties, but four-fifths of the men of the village were well under that age.<sup>129</sup> The number of children found in Gates and Brighton by the Federal Census of 1820 did not yet equal their proportion in western New York as a whole or in the older villages, but one out of every four citizens of the two lower Genesee townships fell in the most vigorous age group, sixteen to forty-five years, a larger proportion than in any of the surrounding communities. This contrast becomes even more striking when it is noted that in the lower Genesee townships fully 57 per cent of this vigorous age group were men, as against 52 per cent in the Genesee Country as a whole.<sup>130</sup> Doubtless the settlers did not regard the scarcity of women as a cause for rejoicing, but, paradoxical as it may sound, it signified the community's vibrant growth.

To a considerable extent Rochester was the creation of the vigorous youth of western New York. Approximately one half of the merchants and artisans who located at the falls between 1813 and 1818 came from earlier Genesee Country settlements. Of 60 persons associated with the village during these years, 23 had previous Genesee residences, 10 hailed from central or northern New York, 5 from the vicinity of Albany, 15 directly from New England, one each from Pennsylvania, Canada, and Germany, while the previous locations of the others is not known. Several of those who came directly to Rochester from the East were relatives or former neighbors of Genesee Country pioneers who were either themselves moving to the village or wished to make investments there under the watchful eyes of their friends.

But if Rochester was a child of the Genesee Country, it was by the same token a grandchild of New England.<sup>131</sup> Of the 60 men considered above, at least 54 were born in that section. The contribution from the South—in the sizable Rochester families and the 27 Negroes, including 9 slaves, living in Gates and Brighton in 1820—just sufficed for the development of a diversified community pattern.<sup>132</sup>

Although Rochester was by no means the leading settlement in western New York in 1818, it had in spite of its youth become a thriving

<sup>129</sup> The names and dates of 75 men resident at Rochester before 1820 together with their previous residence and place and date of birth have been compiled as a basis for this and other generalizations below.

<sup>130</sup> U. S. *Census* (1820). Calculations from the data given.

<sup>131</sup> Elizabeth Turner, "The Settlement of Western New York before 1825," M.A. thesis at Univ. Roch. in 1934. Miss Turner examined the records of 234 groups of settlers in the Genesee Country and found that 103 came from New England, 73 from New York, 5 from abroad, and 53 from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland. Most of the Southerners, as she discovered, located in the Steuben County settlements.

<sup>132</sup> The information concerning these early settlers has been gathered from many sources including The Pioneer Association Records; Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*; Annah B. Yates, "First Church Chronicles."

village in what was still essentially a village world. "Populous and opulent" Canandaigua had in three decades developed an elegance and charm that captivated all visitors, yet it numbered scarcely 2000 citizens and had only 350 houses and shops in 1820.<sup>133</sup> Geneva, Ithaca, and Utica, each with upwards of a thousand residents, as well as Bath, Batavia, and Oswego of more modest proportions, were all incorporated villages with established institutions.<sup>134</sup> Buffalo, in spite of its destruction in 1813, had been quickly rebuilt and already contained around 300 buildings, while the township as a whole totalled 2095 inhabitants.<sup>135</sup> Indeed, west of the city of Schenectady, with its 500 houses and shops and 3939 inhabitants, only Canandaigua, Utica, and Buffalo in New York State exceeded Rochester in population. Even the capital city of Albany, proudly entering upon its third century, had but 2000 buildings and 12,630 citizens,<sup>136</sup> although it stood tenth in size among the cities of the country.

Against this background,<sup>137</sup> Rochester's growth in six years to 1049, and to 1502 two years later when the Federal Census enumerated the residents on both sides of the river, was creditable as well as gratifying.<sup>138</sup> Everard Peck, proprietor of the *Rochester Telegraph*, the recently established second weekly, viewed the increase in population with pleasure and boldly predicted that it might safely be expected to continue and even double in another decade.<sup>139</sup> Colonel Rochester, with similar optimism, settled himself comfortably in the large house built by Dr. Ward and leisurely began to set out some young pear trees in the garden overlooking the river, one block from the Four Corners.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Frances Wright, *Views of Society*, pp. 127-130; Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), pp. 80-82.

<sup>134</sup> Spafford, *passim*.

<sup>135</sup> Spafford, pp. 67-68.

<sup>136</sup> Spafford, pp. 15, 16; U. S. *Census* (1820).

<sup>137</sup> The village background extended throughout the country, in which only 5 cities had upwards of 25,000 inhabitants, with New York at the top boasting only 123,706. There was not a city in the country with over 10,000 which could not be reached by ocean going vessels, and there were only 11 such cities. Among the interior settlements only St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburg, Lexington, Louisville, and Chillicothe exceeded Canandaigua in size!

<sup>138</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, X, 262; *Telegraph*, Oct. 3, 1820.

<sup>139</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 3, 1820; see Peck's obituary written by Thurlow Weed, *Albany Evening Journal*, Feb. 21, 1854, quoted in part by William F. Peck, *Semi-Centennial History*, pp. 664-665.

<sup>140</sup> Enos Pomeroy to Col. Rochester, Nov. 5, 1817, Rochester Letters; Edwin Scrantom, "Reminiscences of Nathaniel Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 316.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BOOM TOWN: 1818-1828 POPULATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

**B**EFORE Colonel Rochester's pear trees could produce their first fruit the prospects of the village were radically transformed, and the orchard had soon to be uprooted. The modest development anticipated by the local optimists of 1820 fell far short of that which actually occurred when the Erie Canal channelled the increasing flood of westward migrants through Rochester. The town's growth during the twenties proved as great a surprise to the villagers themselves as to everybody else, for never before had America witnessed the phenomenon of such a town springing up almost overnight in the midst of a forest.<sup>1</sup> The boom town was soon to become a standard feature of the westward movement as the great migration poured through various focal points in its rush across the continent, and many a louder and more protracted boom would be heard, but meanwhile the experience left its mark on Rochester.

There was something gangling and disjointed—not quite callow, but certainly not urbane—about the village during the decade of its most rapid growth. Rival factions with conflicting standards and divergent interests quickly gained a foothold, and the settlement was distracted for several years by bickering internal quarrels. The unprecedented expansion prompted an early assertion of local aspirations for autonomy, giving the town something of the character of an aggressive intruder among older communities. "*Froth & puffing* is the order of the day," declared one recent arrival from Yale, who regretted in 1818 to find that, "Connecticut maxims & habits are reversed."<sup>2</sup> Yet the "mush-room" continued to grow. Almost giddy from the stimulus of the canal, Rochester preened itself as a representative of the new West. Two more decades were to pass before this strain in its early character was completely outgrown, though the end of the twenties brought the first efforts at self-discipline.

<sup>1</sup> Rochester's growth from 331 in December, 1815, to 1049 in September, 1818, may have had earlier precedents, but the town's increase to 7669 in December, 1826, and to 9207 in 1830 achieved a rate of growth for which there was no previous example. See *Social Statistics of Cities, U. S. Census* (1880), vols. XVIII, XIX.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Spencer to Elisabeth Selden, Rochester, July 9, 1818, Elisabeth Selden Spencer Eaton Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Elisabeth Selden Rogers, New York City.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

If the settlers at Rochesterville in 1820 failed to anticipate the remarkable growth that lay ahead, they were none the less determined to free themselves from dependence upon neighboring rivals. Canandaigua in particular seemed to obstruct Rochester's path, for its leaders envied the mill town's rising influence. The issue was first joined in the struggle for a separate county, but it appeared in other respects as well, notably in the protracted effort to establish the Bank of Rochester. Unfortunately, the close harmony of local interests, which characterized the drive for the county, disappeared in the more complex battle for the bank.

The campaign for a separate county was stubbornly blocked for five years while charges of "selfish local interests" and "ambitious lawyers" flew back and forth between the rival settlements.<sup>3</sup> The agitation started in January, 1815, when Francis Brown, even before the news of peace arrived, gave notice of an application for a lower Genesee county to be established within three years, or as soon as the area should number 15,000 residents.<sup>4</sup> A subscription circulated in 1816 pledged \$6,722 for the necessary county buildings,<sup>5</sup> and public meetings convened repeatedly at Christopher's and Ensworth's taverns to agitate the cause. Three separate delegations bore petitions for the new county to Albany from the Ontario towns of Brighton, Pittsford, Henrietta, Perinton, and Penfield, and from the Genesee County towns of Gates, Riga, Parma, Ogden, Murray, and Sweden.<sup>6</sup>

To the enterprising settlers on the lower Genesee, the logic of their demand seemed clear. Now that two bridges had been built and others were in prospect the river no longer appeared a dividing line. Indeed, it had long since become—by virtue of its facilities as a trade artery and power source as well as its flood hazard—a powerful unifying force. Moreover, the inconvenience of travel over difficult roads thirty or forty miles to the respective county seats was becoming more of a handicap as the volume of land and other legal transactions multiplied. With the growth of affairs in the two large counties, activity so crowded their offices that two or three days no longer sufficed for a visit to court.

<sup>3</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Sept. 30, Oct. 21, Nov. 4, 1817; Jan. 6, Nov. 24, Dec. 15, 1818; *The Penny Preacher*, Sept. 6, 1842.

<sup>4</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Jan. 24, 1815.

<sup>5</sup> "Subscription for the Court House & Gaol, December 18, 1816," Rochester Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>6</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 26, 1815; Dec. 16, 23, 1817; Sept. 8, 1818; *Rochester Gazette*, Sept. 19, 1820; *Rochester Telegraph*, Nov. 28, 1820; "Petitions for the Division of Genesee & Ontario Counties," 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Howard L. Osgood, "The Struggle for Monroe County," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 127-136.

A fair consideration of the welfare of the lower Genesee settlements seemed to require the immediate location there of a properly equipped county seat.<sup>7</sup>

But the issue became entangled with regional and political jealousies. Neither Canandaigua nor Batavia wished to see its sphere of influence reduced, and already the voting strength of these wide-spreading counties was a matter of concern to the fairly evenly matched Clintonian, Bucktail, and Federalist factions at Albany.<sup>8</sup> Though a division of these two vast counties would ultimately be necessary, Avon's aspirations to become the seat of a long county straddling the Genesee from the lake southward to Steuben, and Palmyra's similar dream of providing the seat for another long county bordering the lake from Sodus Bay to Irondequoit conflicted with Rochester's plans.<sup>9</sup> Canandaigua and Batavia appealed for delay, and meanwhile their judges made an earnest effort to clear their dockets by conducting court from sun-up until dusk with the hope of demonstrating an ability to perform their functions promptly.<sup>10</sup>

The weight of numbers postponed the new county, but the same factor ultimately gave Rochester the victory. Early in 1819, when the election of state representatives was fought out in Ontario on this issue, the anti-divisionists won by a small majority.<sup>11</sup> Yet even in this contest the sentiment for division dominated the growing townships bordering the river and the lake, and by uniting them behind a demand for three new counties the Rochester divisionists soon outweighed the opposition of Canandaigua and Batavia.<sup>12</sup> Already in 1820 the area of the proposed new counties numbered a total of 68,000 settlers as against 53,000 in the reduced territory of Ontario and Genesee. The problem of agreeing upon a partition of towns between the projected counties remained, and here again numbers favored Rochester.<sup>13</sup>

Yet only by mustering all its strength did Rochester triumph. Elisha B. Strong of Carthage, won over from an earlier hostility to the proposed county,<sup>14</sup> journeyed with Colonel Rochester to engineer the final campaign in Albany. After many discouraging delays the legislature acted

<sup>7</sup> Jesse Hawley to Col. Rochester, Canandaigua, Aug. 2, 1817; William B. Rochester to Col. Rochester, Albany, Mar. 27, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Brown to Roswell Babbitt, Albany, Jan. 30, 1819, Autograph Letter Coll., Roch. Hist. Soc.; Osgood, "Monroe County," p. 127; Alexander Flick, ed., *History of the State of New York* (New York, 1933-37), VI, 44-53.

<sup>9</sup> Osgood, "Monroe County," pp. 130, 133-135.

<sup>10</sup> Osgood, "Monroe County," p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 13, May 4, 1819.

<sup>12</sup> Col. Rochester to Abelard Reynolds, Albany, Jan. 9, 24, Feb. 2, 7, 13, 1821, Rochester Letters.

<sup>13</sup> N. Y. State *Census* (1855), p. xxxiii.

<sup>14</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Apr. 13, 1819. E. B. Strong was on the anti-divisionist ticket in 1819. See above p. 62.

on February 20, 1821, to create Monroe and Livingston Counties, deferring the organization of Wayne another two years. Named after the President, who had recently skirted the area,<sup>15</sup> Monroe County secured its original claim and portions of Caledonia, Rush, and Mendon on the south—a territory of 607 square miles, slightly larger than any of the other new counties. This region, despite its delayed settlement, contained 27,288 residents, and by 1825 exceeded reduced Ontario.<sup>16</sup>

The achievement of local autonomy set the stage for keen party rivalry. The traditional Republican sentiment of the larger towns west of the river assured victory over the old Federalism of the eastern townships. But as the Federalist party was rapidly disintegrating, many of its local leaders joined the Republicans in time to share in the appointments. Thus Elisha B. Strong became the First Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and Elisha Ely was commissioned Surrogate. John Bowman, a staunch Republican from Clarkson, received another judgeship, while Colonel Rochester was chosen County Clerk. Though such a division proved scarcely satisfactory to the more confirmed partisans, indignation centered on the appointment of Timothy Childs from Canandaigua as District Attorney over the heads of local aspirants.<sup>17</sup> This early instance of localism was soon forgotten, however, for the rapidly growing community felt prone to extend a generous welcome to able newcomers.

The location of a county seat at Rochester attracted a group of enterprising lawyers, whose presence quickened the political, social, and intellectual life of the community. Ashley Sampson, a graduate of Middlebury, had studied law in the East and practiced briefly in Pittsford before moving to Rochester in 1819.<sup>18</sup> Vincent Mathews, the first lawyer admitted to the bar of Ontario County in 1790 and already a veteran jurist and legislator from western New York, was among those prompted in 1821 to locate at Rochester, where he soon became a respected leader of the profession.<sup>19</sup> James K. Livingston hastened west from Dutchess County, and Daniel D. Barnard from Canandaigua; young Addison Gardiner of Manlius, passing through Rochester on his way to Detroit, determined to hang his shingle here instead and invited

<sup>15</sup> Col. Rochester to Abelard Reynolds, Albany, Feb. 17, 20, 1821, Rochester Letters. The act became a law on Feb. 23, 1821.

<sup>16</sup> N. Y. State *Census* (1855), pp. xxxiii, xxxiv, 277.

<sup>17</sup> Col. Rochester to D. E. Evans, Rochester, May 17, 1821, Rochester Letters; *Telegraph*, May 15, 1821; "Elisha Ely," in Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, pp. 90-92; Timothy Childs' obituary, *Rochester Republican*, Dec. 14, 1847.

<sup>18</sup> Samson Note Book, X, 359-360, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>19</sup> William B. Rochester to Col. Rochester, Bath, Feb. 4, 1821, Rochester Letters; Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 322; see obituary in *Democrat*, Sept. 24, 1846.

his friend, Thurlow Weed, to follow him.<sup>20</sup> Not only did a distinguished bar quickly gather, but also a plenitude of aspiring politicians—a circumstance soon abundantly evident.

While the political pot was beginning to boil, the essential county functions were hastily provided. Three sites were offered for the court house—two east of the river—but that formerly set aside by Rochester, Fitzhugh, and Carroll was duly accepted as the most central and conveniently located.<sup>21</sup> A contract was let for the erection of the county buildings,<sup>22</sup> and in the meantime the first session of the Court of Common Pleas convened in May in the newly added loft of Ensworth's Tavern at the Four Corners.<sup>23</sup> Apparently the judicial functions were organized none too soon, for "an alarming increase in petty crimes and misdemeanors" prompted the selection of a grand jury to inquire into the activity of the "grocery and dram shops in the village."<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it proved necessary to occupy a section of the county jail before that structure was completed.<sup>25</sup> Finally in September, 1822, an attractive stone court house with Greek Revival façades stood ready for use.<sup>26</sup>



The early twenties witnessed an even more crucial battle for independence in the financial field. Albany again provided the scene for the conflict in which leading Canandaiguans soon became involved. Though a strong anti-bank sentiment in the legislature delayed action, after repeated reversals the movement for an independent Rochester bank was finally carried to success by the joint pressure of local merchants in quest of capital and Eastern investors seeking a market for their funds.

The campaign for a Rochester bank grew out of an increasing need for credit. After the first unsuccessful appeal for a charter, filed late in 1815, representative villagers petitioned each succeeding legislature, but the dominant political faction at Albany, believing that the depreciated state of the paper circulated by the existing banks could be remedied by limiting the number of such institutions, rejected every

<sup>20</sup> Thurlow Weed, *Autobiography* (Boston, 1883), I, 91-92, 95-100; "Daniel D. Barnard," *Dictionary of American Biography*, I, 617; *Addison Gardiner: In Memoriam* (Rochester, 1883).

<sup>21</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 6, July 3, 1821; Osgood, "Monroe County," pp. 135-136.

<sup>22</sup> *New York Assembly Journal*, 1825, pp. 179, 222. Josiah Bissell, one of the contractors, received \$200 relief for losses incurred in removing stone from the site.

<sup>23</sup> Oswald P. Backus, "History of the Monroe County Court," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 193-196.

<sup>24</sup> "History of the Monroe County Court," p. 199. Backus is quoting apparently from the grand jury report.

<sup>25</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 25, 1821.

<sup>26</sup> Backus, "Monroe County Court," p. 196; *Directory of the Village of Rochester* (Rochester, 1827), p. 124.



application.<sup>27</sup> Frustrated in this effort, Rochester merchants had to resort to Canandaigua, Utica, and Geneva banks, an inconvenience the more serious as the volume of business increased at the falls.<sup>28</sup> The visionary leaders of Carthage made an unsuccessful bid for a branch of the United States Bank in 1818,<sup>29</sup> and shortly after the organization of the county it was suggested that a branch of a neighboring bank might be located at Rochester, thus obviating the objections of politicians to the creation of a new institution. Both the Ontario Bank in Canandaigua and the Bank of Utica hastily applied for this privilege, rallying the support of their respective Rochester friends.<sup>30</sup>

The rival petitions split the village into hostile camps. The simulated good feeling under the dominant Republican banner, which had elected Colonel Rochester to the legislature in 1821, disappeared in the face of a frigid January storm of resurgent factionalism. Personal and group antagonisms, stubborn political animosities, theological differences, and the backwash of economic misfortune<sup>31</sup> joined to produce a bitter quarrel, revealing that the village had yet to develop an urbane self-restraint.

Colonel Rochester's white hairs bristled at the thought of a Canandaigua branch in Rochester. His own relations with the Ontario Bank had never been too friendly, resulting partly, as he supposed, from jealousy of his growing village.<sup>32</sup> Rebuffed on one or two occasions, Colonel Rochester had turned to Eastern sources for his funds, to Hagerstown, Baltimore, and New York, and he had early become a stockholder and director of the Bank of Utica. As a branch of that institution would, he was convinced, provide the desired banking services without meddling in community affairs, the Rochester family and their associates supported its application.<sup>33</sup>

Colonel Rochester quickly identified the supporters of the Canandai-

<sup>27</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 26, 1815; Dec. 16, 1817; *New York Senate Journal* (1816), pp. 157-158. See also Robert E. Chaddock, *The Safety Fund Banking System in New York State* (National Monetary Comm., Washington, 1910), pp. 233-257.

<sup>28</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 17, 1822; *Assembly Journal* (1824), p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> Levi H. Clarke to Joshua Stow, Carthage, Mar. 17, 1818, "Memorial to the President and Directors of the Bank of the U. S.," R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 222-231.

<sup>30</sup> *Telegraph*, Feb. 19, 1822; "Petition of the President and Directors of the Ontario Bank for a Branch at Rochester," signed by N. Gorham, Dec. 12, 1821; "Petition of the Inhabitants of Rochester to have a Branch of the Ontario Bank established in the Village," signed by 84 villagers, Jan. 18, 1822; "Petition for the removal of the Utica Bank's Canandaigua Branch to Rochester," signed by 22 villagers, Jan. 10, 1822, Rochester Letters.

<sup>31</sup> See below, pp. 85, 127, 130-131.

<sup>32</sup> Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, May 11, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>33</sup> Rochester Letters, 1814-1824. See especially N. T. Rochester to Col. Rochester, Rochester, Mar. 5, 1822.

gua branch as New England-Federalists. Unfortunately, they greatly outnumbered the aged Colonel's backers, in spite of the increasing ramifications of his family ties.<sup>34</sup> From the angle of the opposition, the Rochester clan itself appeared a major grievance, for it was becoming difficult to turn about in the bustling village without stumbling over a member of the proprietor's family. But it was not so difficult, in the Colonel's opinion, as to avoid a Yankee bristling with Presbyterian virtue and shrewd schemes for fat profits. Had he not, the old man reflected, given a hand to more than a few of these villagers when adversity overtook them in the early days? And now, in place of gratitude, they supported his inveterate opponents in Canandaigua! <sup>35</sup>

The fate of the proposed branches soon became entangled in state politics. An effort to conciliate both factions coupled the rival applications in one bill, which at first made rapid progress. When Canandaigua Federalists proposed, as a concession to Republican sound-money doctrine, to require both banks to redeem the paper of their existing branches before making the intended removal, the amendment speedily passed. But Colonel Rochester saw the measure as a stratagem designed to discourage the Utica Bank from moving its Canandaigua branch under conditions which would redound to the advantage of the Ontario Bank. The Colonel decidedly preferred a further postponement of the issue, and on his recommendation the bill was defeated at the third reading.<sup>36</sup>

The outcome proved not unwelcome in Rochester, where the desire for an independent bank continued strong.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, Colonel Rochester sounded out the possibility of securing a branch of the Manhattan Company of New York,<sup>38</sup> while E. B. Strong developed an agency for the Ontario Bank, serving Rochester in an informal private banking capacity.<sup>39</sup>

The campaign shortly revived, and "nine several petitions of sundry inhabitants of the County of Monroe" greeted the next legislature.<sup>40</sup> Colonel Rochester, giving place in the assembly to his Republican friend, Judge Bowman, coöperated in drafting a bank charter which named a suitable board of commissioners to supervise the sale of stock and the

<sup>34</sup> See below, pp. 139-140.

<sup>35</sup> Hervey Ely to Col. Rochester, Mar. 12, 1823, Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, May 11, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>36</sup> Col. Rochester to E. B. Strong, Albany, Feb. 25, 1822, Rochester Letters; *Assembly Journal* (1822), pp. 436-437.

<sup>37</sup> N. T. Rochester to Col. Rochester, Rochester, May 5, 1822, Dr. M. Brown to Col. Rochester, Rochester, Mar. 9, 1822, E. B. Strong to Col. Rochester, Rochester, Mar. 11, 1822, Rochester Letters.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Penfield to Col. Rochester, New York, Apr. 30, 1822, Rochester Letters.

<sup>39</sup> Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, May 15, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>40</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 17, 1822; *Assembly Journal* (1823), pp. 21, 262, 350.

election of directors. Despite the appearance in Albany of Josiah Bissell, an opponent of all banks, bearing a petition to that effect from a number of his friends,<sup>41</sup> the bill made some progress before dying in committee.<sup>42</sup> Back in Rochester the smoldering factional jealousies obstructed the selection of a legislative agent to renew the campaign. Finally, a youthful journeyman printer associated with Everard Peck on the *Telegraph* was suggested, and with some trepidation Thurlow Weed was sent to Albany as the bank committee's "legislative solicitor."<sup>43</sup>

Weed, who had already won his spurs as a Clintonian editor, soon became engrossed at Albany in negotiations between the Clinton, Adams, and Clay supporters over state and national issues—not, however, forgetting the Rochester bank. Despite the Bucktail faction's general hostility to banks, except of course good Republican ones, Weed's efforts in behalf of the Rochester bank prospered as long as he did not insist on Clintonian control, and he did not make such a demand. Probably his Rochester friends did not anticipate early results, as they failed to forward their revised bill, naming a Clintonian board of directors in the charter, until after the earlier draft, under the watchful care of Judge Bowman, was reported out of committee.<sup>44</sup> Even after this initial slip, the Rochester Clintonians, confident that their numerical advantage assured control, directed Weed to support the measure as it stood.<sup>45</sup> The legislature obliged by shelving the renewed petitions for Ontario and Utica branches in Rochester and passed the Bank of Rochester bill, entrusting the organization to a group of commissioners headed by Colonel Rochester.<sup>46</sup> Weed received due honors upon his return, and the state was to hear more from this fledgling politician,<sup>47</sup> but the bank affair had not yet ended.

Rivalry over the bank's control increased in intensity with each step in its organization. When the subscription books were opened at the Christopher House, the \$250,000 in capital stock provided for under

<sup>41</sup> Assembly *Journal* (1823), p. 514; J. Spencer to Col. Rochester, Albany, Feb. 19, 1823, Rochester Letters.

<sup>42</sup> Assembly *Journal* (1823), pp. 378, 742, 797, 915; J. Spencer to Col. Rochester, Albany, Feb. 19, 1823, Rochester Letters.

<sup>43</sup> Glyndon G. Van Deusen, "Thurlow Weed in Rochester," *Rochester History* (April, 1940), pp. 5-6; Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 104-107.

<sup>44</sup> John Bowman to Col. Rochester, Albany, Mar. 8, 1824, Rochester Letters; Matthew Brown to Thurlow Weed, Rochester, Jan. 1, 1824, E. B. Strong to Weed, Clyde, Jan. 26, 1824, Weed Papers, Univ. Rochester.

<sup>45</sup> E. Pomeroy to Weed, Rochester, Jan. 23, 26, Feb. 4, 1824, Weed Papers; Van Deusen, "Thurlow Weed," pp. 6-10.

<sup>46</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 16, 1824; Assembly *Journal* (1824), pp. 87, 184, 236, 279, 486, 603, 658, 741, 909, 967, 980, 997-998. See also Chaddock, *Safety Fund Banking System*, p. 245.

<sup>47</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 106-107, 157-162. The Rochester committee raised a total of \$1000 to defray the expenses of their solicitor in Albany.

the charter was oversubscribed fivefold.<sup>48</sup> Many came prepared to enter applications for friends unable to attend, and Colonel Rochester himself had a pocket full of out-of-town applications, together with their first cash payments, not to mention proxies.<sup>49</sup> It would be necessary for the commissioners to scale down many, if not all, subscriptions, and the villagers awaited the outcome with anxiety.

Among the considerations weighed by the commissioners was the oft-expressed desire to bring Eastern capital into the village.<sup>50</sup> Erasmus D. Smith, Judge Bowman, and Matthew Brown, as well as Colonel Rochester, had collected applications from investors in New York, Albany, and Troy,<sup>51</sup> while Abraham M. Schermerhorn of Cherry Valley, a candidate for the post of cashier, was eager to secure a block of stock. Judge E. B. Strong's request for 400 shares doubtless cloaked a Canadaigua investor, and the same suspicion attached to other subscriptions. Though the commissioners were reluctant to admit any capital which might be used in the interests of Rochester's old rival, they did grant large blocks of stock to such Eastern investors as Dr. Russell Forsythe of Albany, Alanson Douglas of Troy, and others in New York City. Several Eastern applications and many from older Genesee County settlements were rejected, while most local applicants received only a fraction of their subscriptions.<sup>52</sup>

Any apportionment was certain to give offense, but the outburst of indignation which greeted the work of the commissioners exceeded in fury all previous disputes. It was immediately noted that Douglas and Forsythe, who together held a controlling block of stock, were Bucktail friends of Bowman and Rochester and had apparently entrusted their proxies to that faction. The *Rochester Telegraph* printed a bitter attack on the commissioners by E. B. Strong<sup>53</sup> to which Colonel Rochester answered with heat in the *Monroe Republican*.<sup>54</sup> A remonstrance, signed by twenty-one villagers, declared "their intention to withdraw their business from the institution while it remained under the control of Nathaniel Rochester and John Bowman."<sup>55</sup> Many who refused to sign this violent attack nevertheless attended a dinner to Samuel Works,

<sup>48</sup> *Telegraph*, May 4, 11, 1824. The subscription reached \$1,500,000.

<sup>49</sup> Rochester Letters, April and May, 1824.

<sup>50</sup> E. Pomeroy to Weed, Rochester, Jan. 23, 26, 1824, Weed Papers.

<sup>51</sup> John Bowman to Col. Rochester, Albany, Mar. 8, 1824, Philip Kearny to Col. Rochester, New York, Apr. 24, 29, May 1, 1824, Rochester Letters. Erasmus D. Smith, of Hadley, Mass., who arrived in Rochester about 1822, must be distinguished from E. Darwin Smith who came from Madison County in 1828. The former was Democratic in politics and the latter, a judge, was an Anti-Mason and a Whig until 1848 when he likewise became a Democrat.

<sup>52</sup> Col. Rochester to Ira West, Rochester, May 17, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>53</sup> *Telegraph*, June 15, 29, 1824.

<sup>54</sup> Col. Rochester to D. Sibley, Rochester, July 31, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>55</sup> Remonstrance to R. Forsythe, May 11, 1824, Rochester Letters.

leader of the remonstrants,<sup>56</sup> while a new petition was circulated for the establishment of a Canandaigua branch at Rochester.<sup>57</sup>

Concerned over the safety of his investment, Alanson Douglas hastened westward from Troy in an effort to moderate the conflict by voting his stock in person and conciliating, if possible, some of the less violent opponents. A mixed board of directors included Matthew Brown, Levi Ward, Enos Stone, Frederick Bushnell, and James Seymour from among the less truculent Clintonians, balanced by E. D. Smith, John Bowman, Charles H. Carroll, Abelard Reynolds, and Jonathan Child as supporters of Colonel Rochester. Benjamin Campbell and Abraham Schermerhorn were added as large independent stockholders. Colonel Rochester became president with the understanding that he would retire at the end of the year, and Schermerhorn was engaged as cashier at a salary of \$1500 with an allowance of \$200 for house rent until a banking house could be provided.<sup>58</sup>

Unhappily the election of officers served to inflame rather than appease the opposition. Sharp words were exchanged even between members of the same church,<sup>59</sup> and the rival Rochester weeklies gave free expression to bitter charges and counter-charges.<sup>60</sup> The quarrel clouded the celebration of Independence Day when many of the more unrelenting opponents of Colonel Rochester, the orator of the day, refused to attend.<sup>61</sup>

Despite Colonel Rochester's expectations, the clamor failed to die down. It provided, instead, a convenient issue for agitation by the People's party, organized locally that fall by Clintonian friends of Thurlow Weed, whom they sent to the legislature.<sup>62</sup> The Bucktails were widely defeated, although Judge Bowman, with Genesee County support, won a seat in the state senate.<sup>63</sup> Bowman, however, was becoming uneasy over the violent criticism suffered as a result of his connection with the Rochester bank, while Douglas and other Eastern stockholders

<sup>56</sup> Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, May 11, 15, 17, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>57</sup> *Telegraph*, June 29, 1824.

<sup>58</sup> Col. Rochester to A. M. Schermerhorn, Rochester, June 3, 1824, Schermerhorn to Rochester, June 16, 1824, Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, July 2, 1824, Rochester Letters.

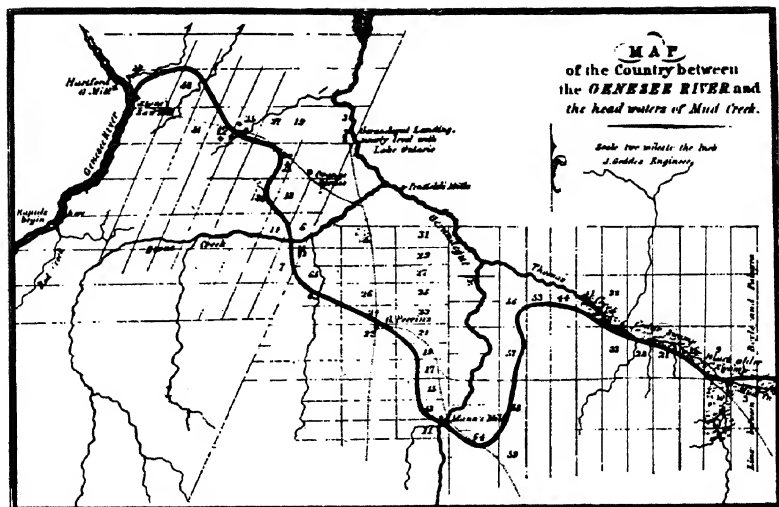
<sup>59</sup> Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, July 16, 1824, A. Douglas to Rochester, Troy, Aug. 2, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>60</sup> *Telegraph*, June 15, 1824; A. Douglas to Col. Rochester, Troy, July 10, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>61</sup> Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, July 6, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>62</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 157-162; Van Deusen, "Thurlow Weed," pp. 8-10; Dixon Ryan Fox, *The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York* (New York, 1919), pp. 288-301.

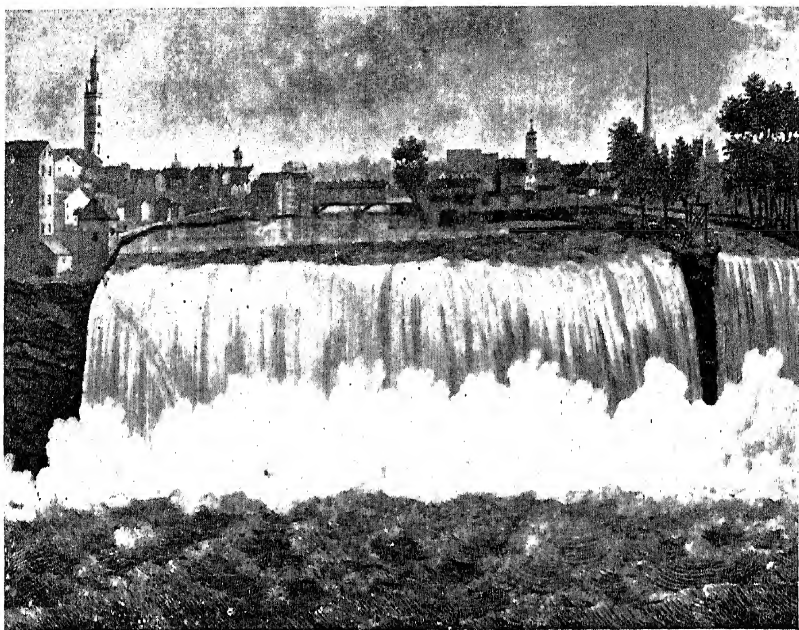
<sup>63</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Nov. 18, 1823.



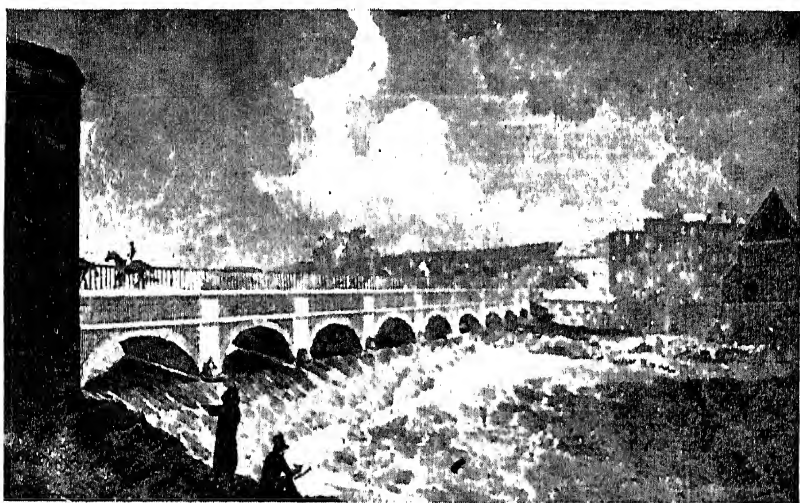
IV. 1. JAMES GEDDES SURVEY MAP OF THE PROPOSED CANAL EAST OF THE GENESSEE, 1809

Course & Distance	Port up 30 Mile Post	
	upland	good
	ground	for road
25.22		25.22 to a Swamp
30.72	Black muck	30.72 to upland
	good	
	for	ground
	road	
48.22		48.22 to a Swamp
58.22	Black muck	58.22 to upland
	land	
	Village of	
	Baker	
	River	
		78.22 to the west end of the bridge over Genesee River at Rochester

IV. 2. ROCHESTER IN 1815, AS SHOWN IN THE FIELD NOTES OF LEMUEL FOSTER



V. 1. VIEW OF THE MAIN FALLS AND VILLAGE, 1830



V. 2. VIEW OF THE FIRST AQUEDUCT FROM THE EAST

began to regret their investments in a community ruled by such violent jealousies.<sup>64</sup> Colonel Rochester himself desired an early retirement from his thankless position. They agreed, however, that the stability of the institution required their faithful adherence until the enterprise should be securely launched.<sup>65</sup>

The bank weathered the storm of its first months more successfully than might have been expected. Perhaps there was something to the Colonel's contention that the more reckless speculators, by voluntary abstention, freed the bank from embarrassing burdens at the same time that substantial friends were encouraged to exert themselves in its behalf.<sup>66</sup> Actually the bounding growth of the village was chiefly responsible for the bank's thriving condition. A central property was acquired, equipped with a house adequate for the bank, the cashier's family, and the directors' office, with a stable in the rear backing on the Court House Square.<sup>67</sup> Schermerhorn proved both a reliable cashier and a conciliatory influence—a valuable addition to the village.<sup>68</sup>

Yet the wide success of the Clintonians or People's party promised trouble for the Bank of Rochester in the forthcoming legislature. The application for a rival bank might succeed, Douglas feared, or a hostile branch might be permitted to locate in the village, or an investigation might be ordered which could result in a revocation of the charter.<sup>69</sup> To head off these contingencies, Douglas disposed of some of his stock, while Bowman and Rochester decided to resign as directors. In a last effort to save the institution from complete opposition control, the Bucktail faction hoped to name a president to balance the Clintonian directors. Colonel Rochester persuaded his son-in-law, Jonathan Child, to become a candidate and lined up what promised to be a majority in his behalf. A hopeless division occurred, however, when the directors met, preventing a choice until Schermerhorn switched his vote to Dr. Levi Ward, thus giving him a bare majority.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>64</sup> A. Douglas to Col. Rochester, Troy, Nov. 18, 1824; J. B. Varnum to Col. Rochester, New York, Aug. 30, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>65</sup> A. Douglas to Col. Rochester, Aug. 2, Nov. 18, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>66</sup> Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, July 16, Dec. 16, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>67</sup> Col. Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, July 2, 1824, Rochester Letters. The property, 66 by 165 feet, cost with improvements \$3400, a sharp advance from the \$50 valuation on the lot a decade before.

<sup>68</sup> *Biographical Directory of the American Congress* (Washington, 1928), p. 1498; see his obituary, *Rochester Daily Union*, Aug. 27, 1855.

<sup>69</sup> A. Douglas to Col. Rochester, Troy, Nov. 18, Dec. 31, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>70</sup> Same to same, Troy, Nov. 18, Dec. 31, 1824, Col. Rochester to Douglas, Rochester, Dec. 16, 1824, Rochester Letters; *Telegraph*, Dec. 28, 1824. For an account of Jonathan Child's career, see Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, pp. 67-68; Barton's Obituary Scrapbook, p. 224, Roch. Hist. Soc.



It was a bitter experience for the aged proprietor to see a member of his family "sacrificed to gratify a few enemies to me and to the Bank."<sup>71</sup> Possibly the shift in leadership helped to defeat the almost successful application for a Merchants', Millers' and Mechanics' Bank for Rochester when the legislature met the next spring.<sup>72</sup> As the year rolled around, most of the Colonel's friends among the directors were removed,<sup>73</sup> and the new board promptly named that "malignant, black-spirited rascal,"<sup>74</sup> Judge Strong, to the presidency<sup>75</sup>—a total victory for local Clintonians in a year during which they were riding high throughout the state.

Nevertheless, the original object of the Colonel's efforts—almost forgotten in the heat of the struggle—had been won. The bank, despite its Clintonian managers, was entirely independent of Canandaigua or other outside control. Indeed, the town had, by 1825, outgrown its old fear of domination from that quarter, and the new political rivalry between Clintonian and Bucktail Republicans had taken its place. The struggle over the bank had assumed a factional aspect as well, but fortunately by the mid-decade the quickening activity in Rochester pressed other concerns to the fore. Though the bitter conflict continued to reverberate through the life of the village, a new spirit of general enthusiasm was soon called forth by the official opening of the canal.

#### THE MARKET TOWN ON THE GENESEE

The commercial activity of the village had been increasing at a steadily accelerating pace for several years. Unable to gauge either the rate or the extent of the advance, many of the pioneers stumbled and fell out of step, adding a personal element to the local economic struggle. "The inhabitants of this village," one resident declared in 1818, "are half of them no better than bankrupts, & the rest can hardly pay. In one word, this place is a *mushroom*."<sup>76</sup> Unlike an urban scene where a man blames himself or the system for his reverses, and unlike the traditional village where all appear to suffer or prosper together in the grace of God, in Rochester it was a man's neighbor who broke his contract and was turned out or given a hand, and in either case the circumstances were remembered. There seemed to be many grievances to remember as the river, the canal, and the resulting commercial

<sup>71</sup> Col. Rochester to Douglas, Rochester, Dec. 16, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>72</sup> Assembly Journal (1825), pp. 24, 943, 977, 986.

<sup>73</sup> Dr. Anson Colman to his wife, Rochester, July 17, 1825, Colman Letters, Univ. Rochester.

<sup>74</sup> Col. Rochester to Douglas, Rochester, July 2, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>75</sup> Telegraph, July 19, 1825.

<sup>76</sup> Joseph Spencer to Elisabeth Selden, Rochester, July 9, 1818, E. S. S. Eaton Letters.

revolution buffeted the town forward. With limited horizons, few realized that there would be ample room for them all and for many more besides in the expanding city soon to emerge.

The village was rapidly outgrowing its frontier days. The newcomer now seldom invited his neighbors over for a house raising; instead, a builder was hired or, more probably, a place rented for a year or two until a firm foothold could be secured. Nevertheless, the friendly coöperative spirit of pioneer days still appeared on numerous occasions in the early twenties. Thus, in 1821, when a fire broke out one February evening in the cooper shop of Benjamin James, the snowbound villagers not only enjoyed their battle against the flames, unsuccessful though it was, but gathered as for a lark the next day and rebuilt the shop on an enlarged plan, making it possible for James to employ twenty-five journeymen coopers for the rest of the winter.<sup>77</sup>

No doubt the camaraderie was most evident after a heavy snowfall when the sleigh bells jingled<sup>78</sup> and great logs blazed in the fireplaces of the scattered homes and public houses. The seasons and the elements still played vital roles in the life of Rochester. Not only did the snowdrifts of one season and the miry bogs of the next directly affect the general welfare, but the power-giving Genesee remained a treacherous benefactor which might at any moment snatch back the wealth and influence it had bestowed. For years the river presented a constant hazard, particularly to the millers, whose dependence on its energy placed them within easy reach of its fury.<sup>79</sup> The bridge at Rochester was frequently threatened and occasionally damaged,<sup>80</sup> though it never suffered the fate of the successive bridges at Avon and Carthage.<sup>81</sup>

No other local catastrophe during the decade quite equalled the fall of the great bridge at Carthage. The hopes and fortunes of the promoters of that lake port had to a considerable extent been tied to the bold project of bridging the gorge. Property valued at \$15,000 had been pledged to the state in order to secure an advance of the necessary building funds. For nine months the workmen labored under the skilled direction of Ezra Brainard, the architect in charge, until, early in February, 1819, the structure stood completed.<sup>82</sup> Soaring 718 feet from bank to bank, 190 feet above the water, with the chord of its single

<sup>77</sup> *Rochester Gazette*, Feb. 13, 1821.

<sup>78</sup> *Rochester Gazette*, Nov. 14, 1820.

<sup>79</sup> William Fitzhugh to Col. Rochester, Hampton, Apr. 9, 12, 1823, Rochester Letters.

<sup>80</sup> Dorothy S. Truesdale, "Historic Main Street Bridge," *Rochester History* (April, 1941).

<sup>81</sup> *New York Laws of 1803*, ch. 89; *Laws of 1806*, ch. 172; *Laws of 1807*, ch. 99; *Laws of 1817*, ch. 104; *Laws of 1821*, ch. 247.

<sup>82</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 27, 1818, Jan. 12, 1819; *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 16, 1817; Feb. 2, 1819.

arch measuring 352 feet, the Carthage bridge surpassed all rivals in its day,<sup>83</sup> and many curious travelers came to view the marvel.<sup>84</sup> For fifteen months creaking stages and heavily loaded wagons jolted safely across, though not without sending shivers up and down the spines of their passengers. The bridge withstood the ravages of two winters, but finally, almost without warning, its Gothic arch gave way under the pressure of the heavy framework, and the timbers tumbled apart into the gorge.<sup>85</sup>

The crashing bridge carried down with it the visionary plans for the village of Carthage.<sup>86</sup> Foreclosure of their properties by the state was postponed on the agreement of the proprietors to build a second bridge.<sup>87</sup> But the new structure proved much less pretentious, while its difficult approaches, which required travelers to descend to the flats above the second falls, restricted its use. Washed out by the spring flood of 1827, it was scarcely missed even by the remaining settlers in that vicinity.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the possibility that the canal would be diverted to a terminus at Oswego, which would have been a boon to all Ontario ports, finally disappeared in 1821, when contracts were signed for work on the western district of the Erie. A briefly considered plan to extend a branch of the canal from the east end of the aqueduct north to the Carthage landing did not materialize,<sup>89</sup> though an inclined plane was constructed to facilitate the transport of goods and passengers up the steep bank from the dock.<sup>90</sup> Many of the more energetic settlers had quickly removed, some of them to Rochester, and the hamlet, renamed Clyde,<sup>91</sup> contented itself with the trade it was able to secure as one of the lake ports for the growing town at the upper falls.

<sup>83</sup> Herman Haupt, *General Theory of Bridge Construction* (New York, 1861), pp. 144-146. This interesting study describes the famous Schaffhausen bridge of Switzerland, with which the Carthage bridge was frequently compared, but which had been destroyed in 1799. O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 385.

<sup>84</sup> "Letter from an American Traveler," *Telegraph*, Aug. 17, 1819; [Frances Wright], *Views of Society and Manners in America*, pp. 163-164; "General Brown's Inspection Tour of the Lakes," *Buffalo Hist. Soc., Pub.*, XXIV, 299-300.

<sup>85</sup> *Directory of the Village of Rochester* (1827), pp. 133-134.

<sup>86</sup> "Memorial to the President & Directors of the Bank of U. S. for a Branch at the Village of Carthage," Mar. 4, 1818, L. H. Clarke to Joshua Stow, Carthage, Mar. 17, 1818, R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 222-232.

<sup>87</sup> "Petition for Remission of Loan of \$10,000," from Elisha Strong and L. H. Clarke, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Senate Journal* (1820), pp. 183-184; Letters to Henry O'Reilly, Sept. 16, Nov. 12, 1834, O'Reilly Doc., Roch. Hist. Soc., relate to his appointment in 1834 as state agent for the disposal of the remaining properties under this old bond.

<sup>88</sup> *Rochester Observer*, Apr. 14, 1827.

<sup>89</sup> *Laws of the State of New York in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals*, I, 511-512.

<sup>90</sup> "Journal of a Trip to Niagara in 1822," MS, Univ. Rochester.

<sup>91</sup> *Telegraph*, June 22, 1819.

The fall rains and spring thaw up the valley provided annual threats,<sup>92</sup> but for many years no flood brought such damage to the village as that of 1817. It was not so much the actual property destroyed as the injury to the morale of the community that made this flood significant. The fact that Elisha Johnson, by raising the dam above the height of previous works of this character, had turned the flood onto the Rochester lowlands proved a cause of bitterness,<sup>93</sup> only partly allayed when the location of the court house definitely fixed the hundred-acre tract as the center for the new town. Meanwhile, Ely, Bissell, and Ely brought a suit for damages to their mill property against Elisha Johnson as the builder of the dam. By agreement, the suit was submitted to E. B. Strong and Ashley Sampson as referees, who recommended a withdrawal and the institution of a new suit to recover from all the parties concerned in the dam. The indignation of Rochester, Fitzhugh, and Carroll—thus unexpectedly involved—knew no bounds. The jealousies developing in the struggle over the bank were fanned to a point where the hostile factions could scarcely communicate with one another.<sup>94</sup> As soon as the Red Mill lease expired, Rochester offered the property for sale;<sup>95</sup> the Ely brothers and Bissell promptly transferred most of their enterprises east of the Genesee. It was not entirely by chance that Clinton Street was laid out on the east side, for political and economic differences were increasingly identified with the natural rivalries of the opposite banks of the river.



Yet dissension failed to check the growing village. The river, bearing an increasing harvest down from its fruitful valley, likewise supplied power to process the goods for distant markets. More substantial mills, several important new industries, many accessory handicrafts, a group of commodious taverns, and a multitude of merchants quickly transformed the falls settlement into the leading market town of western New York—even before the influence of the canal became clearly apparent.

Despite its occasional fits of temper, the Genesee was Rochester's oldest and most reliable friend. The valley rapidly filled with enterprising settlers from the East, whose produce readily followed the water

<sup>92</sup> The Genesee drainage basin covers 2446 square miles, more than four times the area of Monroe County, but only a small part of the county lies in the Genesee basin.

<sup>93</sup> William Fitzhugh to Col. Rochester, Hampton, Apr. 8, Sept. 9, 1819; Charles H. Carroll to Col. Rochester, Williamsburg, Oct., 1819, Rochester Letters.

<sup>94</sup> H. Ely to Col. Rochester, Rochester, Nov. 20, 1822; Mar. 12, 1823, Rochester Letters. Ely apparently failed to receive replies from Carroll and Fitzhugh, while Ely himself delayed for half a year a reply to Col. Rochester.

<sup>95</sup> *Telegraph*, July 10, 1821.

drainage.<sup>96</sup> Products characteristic of frontier days, such as logs, ashes, staves, and whiskey, constituted the major exports,<sup>97</sup> but a few progressive farmers specialized in breded cattle and sheep,<sup>98</sup> while others were experimenting with new varieties of wheat in quest of seed adapted to the area.<sup>99</sup> The stimulus of high prices over a period of years after 1813 joined with the succession of favorable growing seasons, beginning with 1819, to produce increasingly abundant crops.<sup>100</sup>

The river quickly developed a colorful commercial life. Docks appeared at favorable points, and among other boats the *Shove-a-head* made regular weekly round trips for several months in 1820. Heavy loads of staves, ashes, corn, and whiskey floated down to Rochester, while lighter loads of merchandise were poled slowly back to Geneseo.<sup>101</sup> In 1822 it was estimated that "more than 10,000 bbl. of flour with large quantities of pork and potash and many other articles of country produce were carried down that river to . . . the largest market town in the state west of the capital."<sup>102</sup>

The proportions of this trade emerged most strikingly in the export statistics of the Genesee Port. Despite adverse circumstances the volume of these shipments increased steadily down to the mid-twenties. The flour export jumped from 20,000 barrels in 1818 to 67,467 in 1820, when it represented 55 per cent of the \$375,000 valuation put on the exports of that year.<sup>103</sup> An average of fifteen schooners and two steamboats called each week during the busy season, while the collector reported a total of 316 visits in 1820.<sup>104</sup> Local as well as Oswego and Canadian forwarding companies delivered the produce to distant markets and filled Genesee orders for foreign merchandise.<sup>105</sup> Several small schooners

<sup>96</sup> H. G. Spafford, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (1824), pp. 287, 326. By 1821 Livingston and Monroe counties together boasted of 157,000 acres of improved farm land.

<sup>97</sup> U. R. Hedrick, *A History of Agriculture in the United States* (Albany, 1933), pp. 134-164.

<sup>98</sup> L. W. Hopkins to Col. Rochester, Geneseo, Oct. 12, 1812, Rochester Letters; Wheatland Agricultural Society, Record Book (1822-1827), MS, Roch. Hist. Soc. The first funds raised by this society in 1822 went to the purchase of a bull for use on the members' farms.

<sup>99</sup> Rawson Harmon, Jr., "The Several Varieties of Wheat and Their Respective Value," N. Y. State Agricultural Society, *Transactions for 1841* (Albany, 1842), II, 254-256.

<sup>100</sup> William Garbutt in N. Y. State Agricultural Society, *Transactions for 1844* (Albany, 1845), IV, 99-101. Elizabeth Turner, "The Settlement of Western New York," MS, M.A. Thesis, Univ. Rochester (1934), pp. 102-104.

<sup>101</sup> *Gazette*, June 13, 1820.

<sup>102</sup> *Senate Journal* (1823), pp. 81-82.

<sup>103</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1820), pp. 925-927.

<sup>104</sup> *Gazette*, June 13, July 15, Oct. 10, 1820. Marine lists were printed each week in this and other local papers. *Telegraph*, Jan. 16, 1821.

<sup>105</sup> *Monroe Republican*, June 21, 1821.

were built in the Genesee during the decade, chiefly by the Rogers brothers, whose activities at Carthage helped to make that port the favored Genesee landing.<sup>106</sup>

Rochester, becoming more conscious of its character as a trading and export town, sent petitions to Albany and Washington, urging the improvement of the channel and the erection of a lighthouse at the mouth of the river.<sup>107</sup> News of impending tariff restraints on trade with Britain brought an immediate remonstrance from Colonel Rochester, who declared that such a measure would do "great injury to the 300,000 settlers of the Genesee Country," many of whose land titles depended upon their ability to make annual payments and whose only commercial outlet was through Montreal.<sup>108</sup>

That the St. Lawrence was not a safe trade outlet for Rochester soon became evident, yet for a time a profitable commerce was enjoyed. Although satisfactory improvements of the harbor were delayed until the close of the decade,<sup>109</sup> a lighthouse appeared on the west bank in 1822.<sup>110</sup> The flour exports mounted to 130,000 barrels by 1823,<sup>111</sup> but declining prices, occasioned in part by a flooding of the Montreal market with both Canadian and American produce, were already reducing Rochester's trade balance. The Canada Trade Act of 1822, restricting the participation of American boats in such commerce, served an additional warning. Canadian shippers could still carry Genesee food products to Montreal free of duty, and the exports of lumber and potash in American bottoms continued to mount, but gloom would have settled over the village had not the rapid progress on the canal promised a remedy.<sup>112</sup>

Rochester was a mill town by birthright, however, and the upsurge of its economic activity definitely preceded the arrival of the canal. Already in 1821 the village contained four flour mills and seven saw-mills, while seventeen others operated in the near vicinity. Logs comprised the chief raw material, processed in part by eight asheries near the village and forty-four in the county.<sup>113</sup> Most of the rural settlers improved the long winter months by cutting staves for the Rochester

<sup>106</sup> George H. Harris, "Early Shipping on the Lower Genesee River: Reminiscences of Captain Hosea Rogers," *R. H. S., Pub.*, IX, 101-105.

<sup>107</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1820), pp. 925-927; Jesse Hawley to Col. Rochester, Canandaigua, Aug. 2, 1817, Rochester Letters.

<sup>108</sup> Col. Rochester to Henry Clay, Rochester, Apr. 8, 1820, photostat letter at Univ. Rochester.

<sup>109</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 25, 1823; *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, May 18, 1830; *Rochester Republican*, July 5, 1830.

<sup>110</sup> *Telegraph*, Feb. 13, 1821, Feb. 5, 1822; *Rochester Directory* (1827), p. 135.

<sup>111</sup> Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), pp. 190-191.

<sup>112</sup> D. G. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence: 1760-1850* (Toronto, 1937), pp. 190-193, 234-240; *New York Senate Journal* (1823), p. 397.

<sup>113</sup> *Telegraph*, Sept. 4, 1821, Jan. 3, 1822.

coopers to assemble into barrels for the millers and distillers, who shared the task of preparing the increased supply of grain for market.<sup>114</sup> Bark and hides from up the valley kept a local tannery busy and supplied raw material for the saddlers and shoemakers whose products were in demand on the expanding frontier.<sup>115</sup> A paper mill as well as a woolen and a cotton factory operated on a small scale; several triphammer shops and blacksmith forges, dignified as iron foundries, produced and repaired the necessary metal tools.<sup>116</sup> "Slightly exaggerated" reports of rich coal and iron deposits along the Genesee further stimulated local optimists.<sup>117</sup>

Enterprising Yankees filled the streets about the bridge with shops of varied pretensions. Upwards of fifty "general merchandizing establishments" advertised their arrival before 1825, though many quickly disappeared.<sup>118</sup> More permanent stores specialized in books, hats, shoes, fish, hardware, and drugs,<sup>119</sup> but next to the general store in popularity stood the humble but hospitable grocery.<sup>120</sup> Hamlet Scrantom, again tiring of the arduous labors of milling, re-opened such an establishment in 1821. The entries in his cash book reveal that the villagers dropped in occasionally for potatoes, apples, candles, crackers, and cheese, or possibly eggs, salt, and bitters; but tobacco, cider, and most of all whiskey served as the primary attractions. Indeed, seven barrels of the last article, bought wholesale at 25 cents a gallon, kept Scrantom in stock for several months, enabling him to fill his grocery shelves with the barter traded in by his various customers. One artisan called with eight pairs of shoes to settle his account, and within a month Scrantom had disposed of them at \$1.50 a pair. Ice cream and soda water were added to his line in 1823,<sup>121</sup> possibly in an effort to meet the ingenuity of some close rival among his forty-odd merchant competitors, whose versatility kept the commercial life of the village in constant flux.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *Telegraph*, July 4, 27, Sept. 5, 1820; Jan. 3, Dec. 31, 1822; "E. Pomeroy's Report on Rochesterville's flour product," Dec. 11, 1819, Rochester Letters.

<sup>115</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 7, 1820; June 5, 26, Aug. 7, Nov. 6, 1821; "Asa Weston's Contract to build a Tannery for Colonel Rochester," Aug. 17, 1818, Rochester Letters.

<sup>116</sup> *Telegraph*, Feb. 2, 16, 1819; May 30, 1820; Feb. 19, 1822; Feb. 25, Apr. 15, 1823; May 25, June 27, 1824; *Assembly Journal* (1823), pp. 734-735; Colonel Rochester to A. Douglas, Rochester, Dec. 16, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>117</sup> *Telegraph*, July 23, 30, 1822; Hibernicus [DeWitt Clinton], *Letters on the Natural History and Internal Resources of the State of New York* (New York, 1822), pp. 37, 99-102.

<sup>118</sup> Newspaper Index, Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>119</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 3, 1820; *Monroe Republican*, Dec. 11, 1821.

<sup>120</sup> *Telegraph*, July 28, 1818, July 17, 1823.

<sup>121</sup> H. Scrantom's Day Book, MS, II, 54-102, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Telegraph*, Oct. 14, 21, 1823; July 27, 1824.

<sup>122</sup> Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), pp. 190-191.

The usual array of skilled artisans filled the village with activity. In 1820 William Reynolds, the postmaster's oldest boy, opened a barber shop, the second in the village.<sup>123</sup> It was a good way to keep tabs on one's rapidly changing neighborhood in which tailors, hatters, clothiers, and milliners catered to personal needs; tallow chandlers, bakers, chair- and cabinetmakers supplied necessary household articles; while wheelwrights, saddlers, and coachmakers served the never-ending procession of travelers. Every week or so a new advertisement appeared in the rival papers, a new sign was hung in Buffalo or one of the lesser streets.<sup>124</sup> Carpenters, brick- and stonemasons, painters, and plasterers were busy filling the gaps in the settlement, while neat wood and brick houses, painted white with green Venetian shutters, spread over the stump-infested environs.<sup>125</sup>

The building industry topped all others in activity, just as the promotion of town lots excelled as a source of profit. In the twelve months preceding June, 1823, one church, nine three-story brick buildings, and a hundred and fifty houses of various dimensions were erected—a 25 per cent growth in one year.<sup>126</sup> Still the accommodations proved insufficient for the throng of newcomers, though the number forced to camp in their wagons during the first weeks after their arrival was not as great as a few years before.<sup>127</sup> Thurlow Weed discovered that no decent house could be rented short of twelve shillings a week—with the result that the youthful journeyman and his family found shelter with his hospitable employer, Everard Peck.<sup>128</sup> Fortunately for Weed, Peck's recently completed brick dwelling on Falls (Spring) Street was one of the most comfortable in the village.<sup>129</sup> The new three-story brick house erected on that same quiet street in 1823 for Colonel Rochester cost \$850, exclusive of a \$600 frame addition later attached. Said to be the work of a recently arrived architect, Captain Daniel Loomis, the Rochester house showed a conservative interpretation of the Post Colonial style popular at the time.<sup>130</sup>

In greatest demand was the modest two-story frame house of four rooms built around a central chimney. Colonel Rochester, who put up several of these, rented them at from eighty to one hundred dollars a

<sup>123</sup> *Monroe Republican*, June 26, 1821.

<sup>124</sup> Newspaper Index.

<sup>125</sup> *Telegraph*, July 20, 1819; June 28, 1825; Blake McKelvey, "British Travelers to the Genesee Country," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 30-33.

<sup>126</sup> Spafford, *Gazetteer*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>127</sup> Edwin Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 29, Scrapbook, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>128</sup> Addison Gardiner to Thurlow Weed, Rochester, Oct. 8, 1822, Weed Papers; Weed, *Autobiography*, p. 97.

<sup>129</sup> "The Peck House," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 66.

<sup>130</sup> Rochester Letters, Sept. 1, 1823; Nov. 13, 1825; Walter H. Cassebeer, "Architecture in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 288.



year, or granted a half-year lease to an artisan agreeing to paint or plaster the dwelling.<sup>181</sup> With subdivision taking place on all sides, lots on the outskirts of the hundred-acre tract, originally priced at twenty-five dollars a quarter-acre, were now divided into three or four house lots at two hundred dollars each. Dr. Matthew Brown, Abelard Reynolds, Charles H. Carroll, son of Rochester's former partner, and Frederick Hanford engaged in town-lot promotion west of the river, while Elisha Johnson, Samuel J. Andrews, Ashbel Riley, Josiah Bissell, and several others were similarly employed on the east side.<sup>182</sup> Colonel Rochester, having purchased an additional tract south of the one hundred acres, appraised his remaining town lots in 1825 at \$100,000.<sup>183</sup> The valuation placed on the real estate properties of Gates and Brighton reached \$386,597 and \$378,793 respectively in 1824, increasing to \$665,700 and \$598,200 a year later. The two small townships, added together, considerably exceeded other townships in the state west of Albany, both in their total valuation and in value per acre.<sup>184</sup>

#### THE CANAL BRINGS A BOOM

The rapid construction of the Erie Canal inevitably quickened the town's economic activities. The prospect of a new and sure market encouraged expansion in the milling and commercial fields, while the state expenditures on the waterway, supplying an abundance of ready cash, spurred local enterprise. Almost without realizing it, Rochester had become, if only for a few brief years, the boom town of America.<sup>185</sup>

Interest in the canal became more lively as the work progressed. The opening of the central stretch through Utica in the fall of 1820 dispelled skepticism concerning its practicability.<sup>186</sup> Work on the great embankment, designed to carry the canal over the deep Irondequoit valley,

<sup>181</sup> Rochester Letters, Apr. 19, 1819; Apr. 7, July 28, Oct. 16, 1823.

<sup>182</sup> Levi Ward Coll. MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Telegraph*, May 25, 1824. Most issues of the local weeklies carried advertisements of lots for sale, ranging, where the price was mentioned, from sixty to two hundred dollars each.

<sup>183</sup> Charles A. Dewey, "Nathaniel Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 274; Charles H. Carroll obituary, *Rochester Union and Advertiser*, July 24, 1865.

<sup>184</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1825), p. 190; David H. Burr, *Atlas of the State of New York* (New York, 1829). The statistics included by Burr are from the 1825 state census. Seneca township which included the village of Geneva had 24,676 acres of improved land and was valued at \$1,139,032; Utica in New Hartford township had 19,696 acres of improved land and a real property valuation of \$1,030,602; Canandaigua with 18,208 acres of improved land came next with \$746,969 in real property; Buffalo township had 5,664 acres of improved land and a valuation of \$683,847; but Gates, which came next in value, had only 3,108 acres of improved land and was one of the smallest townships in area west of Albany. Brighton had only 7,945 acres improved. Their combined total area was 49,600 acres, less than many other towns, including Buffalo.

<sup>185</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1827), p. 137.

<sup>186</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 3, Nov. 14, 1820.

brought a surge of activity to the area in the summer of 1821. The letting of the contract for the Genesee aqueduct that autumn gave Rochester final assurance of the canal crossing and released the energies of many who had been awaiting that decision before developing their properties.<sup>137</sup>

The construction of the aqueduct was a bold undertaking for the day, and numerous difficulties were encountered. The first contractor, William Brittin, fresh from his experiences as builder of the new state prison at Auburn, brought along some thirty convicts to relieve the labor shortage at Rochester. Unfortunately, numerous escapes occurred, causing great alarm, and the convict camp had to be displaced by free labor enrolled from newly arrived Irish immigrants.<sup>138</sup> Additional delays occurred when Brittin's death forced the letting of a new contract and when river ice destroyed the partially completed piers during the winter. Meanwhile, the sandstone quarried at Carthage proving unsuitable for capping purposes, a more durable stone was brought from Cayuga, increasing the outlay for the completed aqueduct to \$83,000 by September, 1823.<sup>139</sup> But already the 802-foot massive stone aqueduct, spanning the river on eleven Roman arches, was attracting favorable comment from visiting engineers, fully justifying Rochester's pride in the longest stone bridge yet built in America.<sup>140</sup>



Canal traffic became an important factor in the affairs of Rochester long before the great trade artery officially opened in 1825. A few river boats passed through the feeder and along the canal to Pittsford after July, 1822, making an overland connection with vessels on the completed central section several miles further east, but the stretch over the embankment was not ready until fall.<sup>141</sup> Shipments east started in considerable volume in the spring of 1823, though it was October before boats could use the aqueduct to cross to and from the main part of the village. Rochester joyfully seized the occasion to celebrate the completion of its aqueduct and the beginning of unobstructed water communications with Albany and New York.<sup>142</sup> The canal was opened westward to Brockport early the next spring,<sup>143</sup> and something of the

<sup>137</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 15, Nov. 26, Dec. 10, 1822; *Monroe Republican*, Sept. 4, 1821.

<sup>138</sup> *Telegraph*, July 31, Aug. 7, Sept. 25, Oct. 30, 1821; *Assembly Journal* (1824), pp. 517-519.

<sup>139</sup> *Telegraph*, Sept. 9, 1823; *Laws in Relation to Erie and Champlain Canals*, II, 66, 100-102, 166-167, 567-568; *Assembly Journal* (1824), pp. 515-519, 981-984.

<sup>140</sup> A. Duttonhofer, *A Study-Journey through the United States* (Stuttgart, 1835), R. W. G. Vail, tr., quoted in R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 358; XVIII, 92.

<sup>141</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 2, Nov. 13, 1821; Oct. 15, 1822; *Laws in Relation to Erie and Champlain Canals*, II, 102.

<sup>142</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Oct. 7, 1823; *Telegraph*, Oct. 21, Nov. 11, 1823.

<sup>143</sup> *Telegraph*, Apr. 27, 1824.

character of its early trade appeared in the *Monroe Republican's* weekly report of November 4th:

Arrived since our last: 75 tons Merchandize, 9 do. Castings and Furniture, 226 bu. Grain, 1572 Bbls. Salt; 288 bbls. Flour, 15 Ashes, 18 Oil from Brockport, 16 Cords of Bark, and many passengers.

Cleared same time 56 Boats with: 2000 bbls. Flour, 219 bbls Ashes—92 Salt—18 Pork, 42 Oil—51 Tons Merchandize, 9000 feet lumber and many passengers.

Rochester's preparations for the canal trade centered around the construction of a series of slips or basins for dockage purposes. On the east side, Gilbert's and Johnson's Basins already facilitated the loading of boats at the mills along Johnson's race. Across the river, a half-dozen basins eventually reached into the millyards near the raceway and into potential commercial centers a few blocks further west, thus extending the area of business activity in a broad band through the northern part of the hundred-acre tract and the western section of Frankfort.<sup>144</sup> Child's Basin at the west end of the aqueduct, extending to the north between present Exchange and Aqueduct Streets, quickly became the most active dock in town, making it necessary to limit the time a boat could tie up at one of the adjoining mills or warehouses.<sup>145</sup>

Shipments over the canal began to mount soon after the route was opened to Albany. The first ten days of traffic in 1823 saw 10,540 barrels of flour loaded at Rochester,<sup>146</sup> and year after year the opening weeks in March or April presented a scene of intense activity. Transport costs to Albany dropped from the \$60 or \$100 per ton charges for the wagon haul, to a maximum of \$10 a ton by boat, thus enabling the canal to capture the old freighting business and part of the lake trade with Canada, as well as stimulating the shipment of goods formerly considered unmarketable.<sup>147</sup> Rough totals for the shipments from Rochester in 1823 and 1826 chart the rapid growth of the local canal trade: 64,000 barrels of flour rising to 202,000; 1,200 barrels of pork to 7,000; and 52,900 gallons of whiskey to 135,000.<sup>148</sup>

By the late twenties, when the early canal traffic ran at full flood, an average of around thirty-five boats drew up daily at local docks.<sup>149</sup> In

<sup>144</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1827), p. 122; Edward R. Foreman, "Canal Basins in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 367-368.

<sup>145</sup> "Child's Basin Rules and Regulations," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>146</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 6, 1823.

<sup>147</sup> H. V. Poor, *The Influence of Railroads in the Creation of Commerce* (New York, 1869); see also Percy W. Bidwell and J. I. Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States* (2nd ed., New York, 1941), pp. 180-183.

<sup>148</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1827), p. 115.

<sup>149</sup> Whitney R. Cross, "Creating a City: The History of Rochester from 1824 to 1834," M.A. Thesis at Univ. Rochester, 1936, pp. 60-61. Several of the local papers gave daily lists of the arrivals and departures of canal boats as well as lake craft.

1827 the shipments east from Rochester reached a total value of \$1,200,000, two-thirds of it in flour, and merchandise valued at \$1,020,800 was brought back from Eastern ports to fill the shelves of Rochester stores.<sup>150</sup> The village enjoyed a full and overflowing share of the canal's advantages. For several years the tolls gathered by the local collector exceeded the collections at any two other ports, excluding Albany, and sometimes equalled those levied at the capital on all westbound traffic.<sup>151</sup>

The canal gave an immediate spur to Genesee River trade.<sup>152</sup> The feeder provided a convenient link between the two water routes, and for several years after 1825 chiefly served this purpose. The rapids south of the village still presented an obstruction to boats during the dry season, and a concerted drive by river interests failed to persuade the legislature to authorize the dredging of a channel through the rift.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, the river trade developed to such a point that a shallow-bottomed steamboat was constructed in 1824 for passenger service, though it proved more useful for tugging barges.<sup>154</sup> By 1827, about five million feet of sawed lumber came down the river annually, in addition to the logs floated down in great cribs to make possible nearly double that output from the sawmills of Rochester.<sup>155</sup> At one time more than forty such cribs were tied up above the Johnson dam waiting for high water to flood them over the dam to the lumber yards below.<sup>156</sup>

The commercial opportunities afforded by the canal called for new tributary highways. Advocates of state roads fanning out from Rochester petitioned the legislature in 1823 and succeeding years. As the power to tax unsettled land adjacent to the roads was sought without success,<sup>157</sup> the most practicable methods of connecting an isolated territory with the growing market town proved to be the formation of turnpike companies. Accordingly, the Rochester and Portage Turnpike Company,<sup>158</sup>

<sup>150</sup> *Rochester in 1827* (Rochester, 1828), p. 139.

<sup>151</sup> *Senate Documents* (1827), No. 166E. Rochester's tolls collected in 1826—\$85,779.17, when Albany took in \$120,335, and Buffalo only \$19,558. Buffalo did not exceed Rochester until 1838, when Buffalo's tolls reached \$202,890 to Rochester's \$195,453. *Senate Doc.* (1839), No. 27.

<sup>152</sup> R. Grant, "York Landing," *Livingston Co. Hist. Soc., Proceedings* (1891), pp. 45-50.

<sup>153</sup> *Senate Journal* (1823), pp. 25, 81-82, 232-233, 580; *Assembly Journal* (1823), pp. 514, 644; *Assembly Journal* (1824), pp. 947, 999, 1029, 1181; *Assembly Journal* (1825), pp. 422, 444, 474.

<sup>154</sup> *Livingston Journal*, July 28, 1824; Edward R. Foreman, "Shipping on the Upper Genesee," *R. H. S., Pub.*, IX, 304-308.

<sup>155</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, p. 139.

<sup>156</sup> E. P. Clapp, "The Travel, Trade and Transportation of the Pioneer," p. 119, MS of 1907, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>157</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1823), pp. 602, 682; *Assembly Journal* (1824), pp. 36, 87, 641; *Assembly Journal* (1825), p. 633.

<sup>158</sup> *Senate Journal* (1825), pp. 336, 351-352; *Assembly Journal* (1825), pp. 844, 1142.

the Rome and Rochester Turnpike Company,<sup>159</sup> and the Rochester to Lockport Road Company were chartered and funds gathered for their construction.<sup>160</sup>

Frequent travel over the network of highways that now surrounded Rochester kept them in fair shape except during the muddy season. By the summer of 1822 a daily stage wagon rattled back and forth between Canandaigua and Rochester carrying as many as ten passengers in addition to the mail bags,<sup>161</sup> and though less frequent stages followed the other roads, the taverns at the falls prospered. By 1826 two daily stages left Rochester for Albany by the rival Canandaigua and Palmyra routes, a daily stage left for Lewiston by the Ridge Road, another for Buffalo by way of Scottsville and Batavia, a second to Batavia by way of Chili and Bergen, and still another through Henrietta and Avon to Geneseo.<sup>162</sup> With fares of 3½ cents a mile, these companies did a thriving business, despite the competition of twelve packet boats on the canal (charging only 1½ cents a mile), for the six or eight miles per hour covered by the stages compared favorably with the three and four miles of the packets.<sup>163</sup> "At a moderate calculation," one editor estimated, "there depart daily the round number of 130 persons from this village"—he did not venture to guess the number of arrivals.<sup>164</sup>



Economic activities within the village assumed new proportions in the mid-twenties. Though capital from the East became increasingly available, local enterprise retained control. The building trades boomed, real estate values soared, and milling ventures appeared in numbers that prompted the first effort to conserve water power.

Two closely related major industries created by the new trade artery were the boatyards, which quickly appeared along the canal at the eastern and western limits of the town, and the local forwarding companies, which soon dominated the carrying trade. The abundant lumber supply, including pine from the highlands around the southern edges of the Genesee Valley, made Rochester the favored boatbuilding center for the Erie. The many individual boatbuilders of the early twenties gave place by the end of the decade to six well-organized boatyards where standardized packet and freight boats, worth from \$800 to \$1200 each, were turned out by the score every year.<sup>165</sup>

In like fashion individual boatmen were quickly displaced by the

<sup>159</sup> Senate Journal (1825), pp. 633, 840, 907, 1180.

<sup>160</sup> Senate Journal (1825), pp. 496, 947; Senate Journal (1827), pp. 613, 687, 703.

<sup>161</sup> Jed Baldwin to his daughter, Pittsford, Oct. 9, 1822, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>162</sup> Rochester Directory (1827), pp. 131-132.

<sup>163</sup> Directory, p. 131; Cross, "Creating a City," p. 65.

<sup>164</sup> Rochester Album, May 16, 1826.

<sup>165</sup> Rochester Daily Advertiser & Telegraph, Sept. 19, 1829.

more efficient boat companies. Freight and packet lines made regular calls at the various canal ports where their agents collected shipments for prompt dispatch.<sup>166</sup> By 1827, the Pilot Line, owned by Jonathan Child, scheduled 34 freight boats drawn by 180 horses with regular stops between New York and Detroit. Five other companies active on the canal at that time were owned principally by Rochester men, raising to 160 the total number of boats operating out of Rochester. In the spring and fall the usual charge was one dollar a barrel for carrying Rochester flour to Albany, but rates frequently fell off during summer months when competition for freight became sharp.<sup>167</sup>

An obvious classification of local industries would distinguish those engaged in processing the products of the valley for export abroad from those which converted an easily imported material into articles for sale on the frontier. Most industries of the first variety were established before the canal opened a more reliable market, greatly increasing their importance. Chief among these in 1827 were the seven flouring and nine lumber mills, the two distilleries, and numerous asheries, with such accessory shops as the fourteen coopers among others provided.<sup>168</sup> The size and equipment of two new mills, completed the next year, attracted wide attention and promised to establish a reputation for Rochester flour.<sup>169</sup>

Shops belonging to the second industrial category had likewise arrived prior to the canal, but with improved facilities for importing bulky raw material these establishments began to resemble small factories. More than a score of ironworking shops were noted by the first *Directory*, at least two of considerable size. An iron foundry on Brown's Race turned out millstones, ploughs, and castings of various sorts,<sup>170</sup> while a nail factory was already equipped to cut out its product "by machine as in Birmingham."<sup>171</sup> Scythes, axes, and guns were among other articles produced for sale up the valley and on the expanding frontier. The defunct cotton factory, reestablished and equipped with 30 new power looms and 1400 spindles, gave employment and "the advantages of a school five evenings a week" to eighty children in an attempt to supply the active local market for shirtings, sheets, and other cotton goods.<sup>172</sup>

Several industries likewise developed to convert valley products into

<sup>166</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 10, 1822; Sept. 14, 1824.

<sup>167</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1827), pp. 116-117.

<sup>168</sup> *Directory* (1827), pp. 118-119; see above, pp. 87-90.

<sup>169</sup> *Directory* (1827), pp. 117-118; W. B. Knox to Lemuel C. Paine, Rochester, Aug. 3, 1829, MS, Autograph Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>170</sup> Cross, "Creating a City," p. 83.

<sup>171</sup> Duke of Saxe-Weimar, *Travels through North America* (Philadelphia, 1828), I, 170-172; *Telegraph*, Apr. 6, 1824.

<sup>172</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Dec. 13, 1825; *Directory* (1827), pp. 114, 115, 118, 120.

articles for the local market. Such were two small woolen mills which bought from Genesee sheep growers and sold to Rochester tailors, and the oil mill which pressed the seed of neighboring flax fields. Brickyards turned out 8,000,000 bricks in 1828; one pail factory annually manufactured 25,000 wooden buckets; a window-sash factory, operated by water power, and a lengthy ropewalk were notable additions; while three tanneries contributed a valuable if slightly odoriferous activity.<sup>173</sup>

It was, however, the commercial rather than the industrial revolution that was transforming Rochester, although the enterprise of numerous merchant craftsmen gave promise of again changing the village, like Pittsburgh and Cincinnati before it,<sup>174</sup> into one of the new manufacturing centers of the West. Meanwhile, probably no more than four or five of the 134 "manufactories" listed in the first *Directory* employed over a half-dozen journeymen or other workers, and apparently only forty or so used the hydraulic power of which the villagers boasted. Most of the 423 laborers listed in the *Directory* were unskilled workmen common to any community. The flour and lumber mills gave direct employment to less than one hundred men.<sup>175</sup> The importance of these major industries lay in the fact that the commercial revolution, by opening a vast market for their products, provided Rochester with a favorable trade balance which greatly strengthened its financial position. The town at the same time became a favorite market place for farmers and tradesmen up the valley and for a time throughout the expanding Northwest as well.<sup>176</sup>

By the mid-twenties Rochester boasted "five extensive and excellent hotels, each . . . capable of accommodating between fifty and seventy persons," reported an English traveler who could not find an empty bed in the place. After an uneasy night on a sofa, he breakfasted at the Mansion House on "a variety of meats, pies, cakes, tarts, etc. . . . in company with about 100 persons of fashionable appearance and genteel address."<sup>177</sup> No less impressive were the Ensworth Tavern at the Four Corners,<sup>178</sup> the "Coffee House" or Merchants Tavern on Exchange

<sup>173</sup> *Directory* (1827), pp. 119-120; *Monroe Republican*, Dec. 13, 1825; E. R. Foreman, "Rochester Ropemakers," *R. H. S., Pub.*, VIII, 299-301; L. D. Baldwin, *Pittsburgh: The Story of a City* (Pittsburgh, 1937), pp. 145-153.

<sup>174</sup> Baldwin, *Pittsburgh*, pp. 218-230.

<sup>175</sup> *Directory* (1827), pp. 114-115, 119-120. A rough idea of the numbers employed in the various shops may be secured by comparing the number listed under the different occupations with the number of such establishments: 3 tanneries and 29 tanners; 7 mills and 20 millers; 6 printing offices and 31 printers, etc.

<sup>176</sup> *R. H. S., Pub.*, IV, 242.

<sup>177</sup> E. A. Talbot, *Five Years Residence in the Canadas, including a Tour through Part of the United States of America* (London, 1824), pp. 337-338; *Telegraph*, Nov. 3, 1818; May 25, 1824.

<sup>178</sup> *Powers Commercial Fire Proof Building: A Directory* (Rochester, 1871), p. 5.

Street overlooking the canal,<sup>179</sup> the McCracken Tavern in Frankfort,<sup>180</sup> and the Farmers' or Brighton Hotel east of the river on Main Street.<sup>181</sup> Less pretentious hostelrys accommodated country folk, while ambitious plans for three magnificent new hotels were already projected. The United States Hotel on Buffalo Street, the Rochester House on Exchange Street, south of the canal, and the Eagle Hotel on the site of Ensworth's Tavern at the Four Corners promised new standards of elegant comfort.<sup>182</sup>

But the four-and-one-half story Arcade, erected by Abelard Reynolds in 1828, was the pride of the town, fully balancing the large Globe Building erected by Elisha Johnson at the other end of the bridge only the year before.<sup>183</sup> As Postmaster Reynolds secured most of the necessary capital from Albany and New York City, giving mortgages on the Arcade and other property as security, his backers were naturally concerned that the \$30,000 building should be adequately insured and that the 7 per cent interest payments should be made promptly.<sup>184</sup> Although skeptics expressed fear that Rochester had outdone itself, the store fronts not required for the post office were soon occupied, while the hotel and office rooms above proved much in demand. If any witness doubted the town's growing consequence, he could do nothing better than visit the Arcade, mount its successive stairs to the turret over the roof, and there enjoy a pleasant view of the thriving settlement.<sup>185</sup>

New uses for local property boosted land values and stimulated a greater concern for insurance. When the newly appointed street commissioner took a census of houses late in 1827, he found a total of 1,474, of which 352 had been built that season.<sup>186</sup> Agents of Eastern companies had written numerous fire policies before 1825, when the first local company was chartered,<sup>187</sup> but the chief insurance in the early days had

<sup>179</sup> George B. Sage, "An Important Historic Place in Rochester, 1825," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *The Northern Traveller: Containing the Route to Niagara, Quebec, etc.* (New York, 1826), pp. 75-79.

<sup>180</sup> Edward R. Foreman, "The Old North American Hotel," R. H. S., Pub., VI, 343-345.

<sup>181</sup> *Telegraph*, Aug. 8, 1820, May 25, 1824; Samson's Scrapbook, No. 52, p. 10.

<sup>182</sup> Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," pp. 55-57; *Rochester in 1827*, pp. 142, 149; Jesse W. Hatch, "Memories of Village Days," R. H. S., Pub., IV, 236-244.

<sup>183</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, p. 142.

<sup>184</sup> Reynolds Papers, 1826 to 1834, Nos. 178, 184, 187, 194, 208, 210, 214, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>185</sup> Henry Ibbotson, "A Journey from New York to Buffalo, 1829," MS, Courtesy of Joseph D. Ibbotson, Winter Park, Florida; G. M. Davidson, *Traveller's Guide Through the Middle and Northern States* (Saratoga Springs, 1837), p. 250; see below, p. 203.

<sup>186</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, pp. 138-139. Some doubt is thrown on these figures by the enumeration of only 1300 non-public houses in 1834.

<sup>187</sup> Assembly *Journal* (1825), pp. 25, 80, 225, 493, 527, 537, 541, 567, 704, 740-741.



been the green lumber out of which most of the houses were built.<sup>188</sup> However, with a few lots reaching the giddy value of \$151 a front foot,<sup>189</sup> and with real property soaring above \$1,000,000 in total valuation and paying a rent of \$97,000 in 1827, fire insurance became a recognized part of the annual budget.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, by that date active agencies of eight insurance companies had located in the growing town.<sup>191</sup>

The desire for additional capital continued unabated. The resources of the Bank of Rochester were in such constant demand that interest on its stock advanced from 9 to 11 per cent in 1828.<sup>192</sup> Repeated requests for a second bank besieged Albany,<sup>193</sup> while Colonel Rochester turned again to the United States Bank at Philadelphia to secure, if possible, a branch for the village.<sup>194</sup> Though a second banking institution was not provided until 1829, much Eastern capital ventured into the community, as in the case of the Reynolds Arcade, when the enterprise of a local merchant or an association of partners assumed the initiative. In 1827, however, when a group of Boston capitalists offered to invest fifty thousand dollars in a cotton factory<sup>195</sup> under circumstances which might have led to the absentee proprietorship then developing Lowell,<sup>196</sup> Rochester's leaders gave no encouragement, and nothing came of the plan.

When Rochester took stock of its assets in the first *Directory* of 1827, a feeling of independence and self-confidence resulted from the valuation placed on the Genesee's "hydraulic resources." Estimating the water flow as twenty thousand cubic feet per minute in dry seasons, and multiplying by the 280-foot fall, the author calculated that Rochester had 12,875 horsepower constantly at hand, equal to \$9,718,270 in hydraulic energy each year.<sup>197</sup> Though only a small portion of this natural resource was tapped at the time,<sup>198</sup> steps to safeguard it from injury were being considered. The diversion of Genesee water into the canal between 1822 and 1826 considerably depleted the power available

<sup>188</sup> "Ashley Samson's Reminiscences," in *Rochester Daily Union*, Mar. 29, 31, Apr. 5, 7, 11, 13, 1855.

<sup>189</sup> *Niles Register*, Apr. 28, 1827, p. 160.

<sup>190</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1827), pp. 687, 725, 918.

<sup>191</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, pp. 138, 148-149.

<sup>192</sup> *Telegraph*, Nov. 17, 1828.

<sup>193</sup> *Album*, Mar. 21, 1826; Oct. 16, 1827; Feb. 5, Mar. 11, 1828; *Telegraph*, Nov. 10, 17, 1828.

<sup>194</sup> R. M. Patterson to Col. Rochester, Jan. 14, 1827, Rochester Letters.

<sup>195</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, p. 141.

<sup>196</sup> M. T. Parker, *Lowell: A Study of Industrial Development* (New York, 1940), pp. 59-79; Constance M. Green, *Holyoke, Massachusetts: A Case History of the Industrial Revolution in America* (New Haven, 1939), pp. 18-66.

<sup>197</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, p. 140.

<sup>198</sup> Samson Scrapbook No. 51, p. 9. In 1828 a total of 3400 horsepower was reported available at the four races at the upper and main falls. Cf. Chapter I, note 38.

during the dry summer months, but a concerted protest from local millers prompted the Canal Board to make restitution.<sup>199</sup> With the arrival of Lake Erie water through the canal from the west, Rochester's hydraulic advantages from the tumbling waters of the Genesee seemed assured.<sup>200</sup>

#### AMERICA'S FIRST BOOM TOWN

It was from another stream tumbling through Rochester in these years that the village derived its greatest advantage—the stream of westward-migrating Americans. The Erie channelled the main current of New York–New Englanders through the market town at the falls.<sup>201</sup> A sufficient number of these migrants stopped over long enough to give Rochester the bustling atmosphere that characterized later boom towns. An almost reckless optimism held sway. The skeptical or disillusioned were quickly bought out and enabled to resume their march westward. The constant danger that this vital energy might flow beyond, leaving the town stranded in its wake, prompted the publication of a considerable quantity of literature in the settlement's behalf. Yet so plentiful and unceasing was the flood of newcomers during the twenties that the problem aroused little concern.

Rochesterians were confident enough from the start, but in the mid-twenties they began to see the future of their town through rose-colored glasses. Outgrowing its earlier rivalry with Canandaigua and Utica, Rochester sought comparison with Albany and Troy in the East and with Pittsburgh and Cincinnati in the interior.<sup>202</sup> Moderate men admitted it was impossible to predict what a single decade would bring,<sup>203</sup> but for a brief season Rochester appeared to be "a place of enchantment, and [you] can scarcely believe your own senses, that all should have

<sup>199</sup> *Telegraph*, Nov. 16, 1824; July 5, 1825; *Assembly Journal* (1824), p. 658; *Assembly Journal* (1825), pp. 393–395, 541, 646; *Memorial of the Owners of Water of the Genesee River at Rochester, January, 1853* (Rochester, 1853), pp. 13–14. Hervey Ely received \$1500 damages from the state in 1826, whether for his own or for the losses of all complainants is not clear.

<sup>200</sup> *Album*, Nov. 10, 1825.

<sup>201</sup> In earlier days this migration had followed two main routes: westward over the old State Road through Canandaigua, Avon, Batavia, etc., and southwest by way of Olean and the Ohio. S. R. Brown, *The Western Gazetteer or Emigrant's Directory* (Auburn, 1817), had urged that provisions be secured at Auburn for the southern route; but by 1825 Olean's days as an emigrant dispatch port were over, according to Chester A. Loomis, *A Journey on Horseback through the Great West* (Bath, n.d.).

<sup>202</sup> A. T. Goodrich, *The Northern Traveler* (New York, 1826), pp. 74–78; *Album*, May 16, 1826. "If the country adjacent continues to improve as fast as it has done for ten years past, by the year 1835 Rochester will have outstripped Albany." That goal was not achieved, however, until the seventies.

<sup>203</sup> Joseph H. Nichols, "Diary," MS, Aug. 21, 1825, copy in Samson Note Book, XI, 96, Roch. Hist. Soc.

been the work of so short a period," observed Justice Story in 1825,<sup>204</sup> while Mrs. Basil Hall described it in 1827 as "the best place we have yet seen for giving strangers an idea of the newness of this country."<sup>205</sup>

This surging growth continued throughout the first ten years of the settlement's villagehood. The 1049 inhabitants of 1818 became by local count 9489 at the opening of 1828.<sup>206</sup> Though the advance proved less striking in the decade of the twenties, even the 512 per cent increase of that period (contrasting with 804 per cent for 1818-1828) exceeded the rate of growth of all other communities measured over the full decade.<sup>207</sup> Buffalo was Rochester's closest rival, gaining 313 per cent during the twenties, but Lowell, which sprang practically from zero in 1822 to 6474 by 1830, emerged as the unrivalled boom town of the 1825-1835 period, only to be surpassed in turn by Mobile in the decade of the thirties.<sup>208</sup> Never before had incorporated villages mushroomed at such rates.<sup>209</sup>

Pride in this remarkable growth early gained expression in the local press. The letter of an American traveler, who wrote from Pittsburgh to the *New York Evening Post* in 1819 after an extended jaunt through the West, was republished locally:

As much as has been said about the sudden growth of the towns west of the Allegany, yet nothing I have heard of or seen in the valley of the Mississippi can boast of so rapid growth as the village of Rochester—favored by nature in its location with beauty and grandeur in the cataracts of the Genesee. . . . I shall venture to say that when the neighboring wood is cut

<sup>204</sup> William W. Story, ed., *The Life and Letters of Joseph Story* (Boston, 1851), I, 478. Justice Story's home town, Salem, Mass., with its clipper ships sailing to all corners of the globe, had scarcely exceeded Rochester's growth in two full centuries.

<sup>205</sup> Una Pope-Hennessy, ed., *The Aristocratic Journey* (New York, 1931), pp. 53-54.

<sup>206</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, p. 138. The lack of statistics for 1817 forces a use of the 1818-1828 period, but these local counts are not entirely satisfactory, especially in view of the fact that the Federal census of 1830 reported a population 282 less than claimed in 1828. Nevertheless, as the local census counted an additional 1329 residents in "improvements" on the outer fringe of the village, practically all of them newcomers, who were an integral part of the growing settlement not to be annexed for several years, the 804 per cent increase cannot be far off. The 1828-1830 period was one of stagnation and hard times.

<sup>207</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, VIII, 506; U. S. Census, 1820 and 1830.

<sup>208</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, VIII, 506; Parker, *Lowell*, pp. 68-69; *Gene-see Farmer*, Aug. 25, 1832, p. 267. A contemporary description of Lowell in Rochester concludes with the observation: "No place in the United States, if we except Rochester in our own state, has increased in value and population with such rapidity."

<sup>209</sup> The only possible predecessors were Washington, Cincinnati, and Louisville, but each of these had required from 15 to 20 years to grow from 1000 to 9000.

open to Lake Ontario, this town will be the resort of every tourist, and Rochester . . . will stand unrivalled in the west.<sup>210</sup>

Curiously, the projected canal with its potential bearing on Rochester's future was not even mentioned in this lengthy description.

Astonishment at Rochester's growth characterized the reaction of visitors throughout the twenties.<sup>211</sup> And when Horatio Spafford, struggling with the manuscript of his second *Gazetteer of New York State*, attempted to record the town's statistics, he found each count out of date before it reached the printer, and finally compromised by including data for 1820, 1822, and 1823<sup>212</sup>—a happy solution from the historian's point of view. Spafford, an experienced observer, knew what to expect from forced improvements which wither on the morrow, yet he could not help rejecting his own skepticism in Rochester's case:

Though it must be admitted that the growth has been rapid, almost beyond example, even in our own country, of all others the best supplied with such examples, yet, on a fair and candid examination of its great natural and artificial advantages, it must [likewise] be admitted that Rochester has by no means yet reached its maximum.<sup>213</sup>

Spafford's difficulty in getting the town to pause for a portrait found a parallel four years later when Everard Peck attempted to bring out a second *Directory*. A local census had been ordered by the trustees, who had discovered that mounting census statistics helped to stimulate lot values.<sup>214</sup> Many pertinent data were gathered to add to the historical and descriptive material in the first *Directory* issued the year before, but unfortunately it proved impossible to compile a suitable list of names, occupations, and residences—so rapidly was the community growing, moving in from the East, moving on westward, and shifting about. Accordingly, *Rochester in 1827* appeared in February, devoid of a

<sup>210</sup> *Telegraph*, Aug. 17, 1819.

<sup>211</sup> P. Stansbury, *A Pedestrian Tour of Two Thousand Three Hundred Miles in North America* (New York, 1822), pp. 92-93: "The bell tolled from a gothic spire as I entered the populous and fast increasing town of Rochesterville [in the autumn of 1821]. . . . In short all we beheld causes the mind to recur to the scenes of Babel. . . . From one point I counted eighteen houses in the act of building." "Journal of a Trip to Niagara in 1822," MS, Univ. Rochester: "Rochester . . . has sprung up in the last 8 years and is rapidly improving. During the last year there were more than 100 houses built." R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 26, 32, 36, 38, 88, 90, 93-94.

<sup>212</sup> Spafford, *Gazetteer*, pp. 189-191.

<sup>213</sup> Spafford, *Gazetteer*, p. 190.

<sup>214</sup> Jesse Hawley to Abelard Reynolds, Feb. 15, 1827, Autograph Letters. "Our village census seems to give a great spring to business relating to real Estate in and about the Village—in the rise of Village Lots—and preparations for extensive building next season."

directory of residents, a memorial in more than one respect to the feverishly growing community.<sup>215</sup>



The westward migration, already reaching into the upper lake country, was at the same time filling in many gaps between the Genesee settlements. Monroe County increased in the twenties from 27,288 to 49,855, Livingston from 21,006 to 27,729, Genesee from 18,578 to 26,008, Erie from 10,834 to 35,719, and even old Ontario enjoyed a moderate increment.<sup>216</sup> Michigan Territory grew from 8,896 to 31,639, and a great portion of the newcomers arrived by way of New York State—after 1825 by the canal through Rochester.<sup>217</sup> In fact, many of these western settlers hailed directly from the Genesee Country, where they had sold their improvements to more substantial migrants from back East.<sup>218</sup>

The Reynolds family played characteristic roles in this movement. Abelard, the Rochester postmaster, soon attracted his brother, Albert, to the Genesee Country, but a commercial speculation in Bloomfield proved ill-advised, prompting Albert to head west in an unsuccessful effort to dispose of his goods in a frontier market. When Abelard, having stood bond along with a Rochester associate, was pressed for payment, he set out himself for Ohio to recover the goods and make the best of a bad speculation. Instead, losing track of his brother and the goods, he enjoyed an extended exploratory journey through Ohio and the Illinois country. Though greatly impressed, particularly with the latter region, Abelard returned with the conclusion that "after all, perhaps there is no place which combines a greater profusion and more interesting variety of benefits than Rochester." Albert turned up later in New Orleans, where another brother likewise sought his fortune, while a sister, married to an erstwhile resident of Rochester, moved west to Illinois; but none of the family prospered so well as Abelard, who acquired valuable land holdings in the village and eventually netted a rich reward.<sup>219</sup>

The places of those who moved on westward were quickly seized by newcomers from the East. Indeed, so many newcomers arrived that often families wishing to settle could not find sufficient accommodation. The one hundred or so new buildings erected annually in the early twenties jumped to 352 in 1827, yet the demand continued. The first

<sup>215</sup> Rochester, 1828. See the advertisement on the back of the title page.

<sup>216</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. xx, xxi, xxiii. The statistics are for 1820 and 1830.

<sup>217</sup> George W. Fuller, *Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan* (Lansing, 1916), pp. 73-74, 469-475; C. R. Tuttle, *General History of the State of Michigan* (Detroit, 1876), p. 674.

<sup>218</sup> *Detroit Gazette*, Nov. 13, 1817. "It is said that *Twenty-five families* from one county (Genesee) in the State of N. Y. have recently arrived with the intention of settling at the River Raisin."

<sup>219</sup> Reynolds Papers, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc., especially Abelard Reynolds to Albert Reynolds, May 11, 1828; July 4, 1845.

*Directory* listed 1169 boarders against 1137 householders, and while many of the former resided at the numerous taverns, the great majority lodged in private dwellings which generally comprised but four rooms and an attic. When the local census taker counted 1664 families in the village at the close of 1827, he found but 1474 buildings of all sorts.<sup>220</sup> The resulting congestion contributed alike to the outward extension of the village and the mounting lot values. House rents soared until one observer declared that even New York City homes could be leased more reasonably;<sup>221</sup> only the opportunity to take in boarders saved many renters from eviction.

But if the center of the town with its stores, churches, hotels, and private dwellings "all in motion creeping upwards," and its streets "crowded with people, carts, stages, cattle, pigs, far beyond the reach of numbers" seemed astonishing, it was as nothing in Basil Hall's opinion compared with the suburbs where "small houses and large and handsome ones" were being erected in the midst of stumps almost in the shade of the virgin forest.<sup>222</sup>

As inclusion within the village limits promised added respectability to outlying improvements, agitation for an extension of the boundaries was recurrent. Elisha Johnson especially wished to include his East Rochester development within the corporation,<sup>223</sup> and in April, 1823, the village officially spanned the river, adding about 357 acres on the east bank to its west-side acreage of 655, and increasing the population to an estimated 3700 by that June.<sup>224</sup> New demands for annexing the improvements springing up on the southeastern and southwestern borders of the village brought results when 226 acres were added.<sup>225</sup> Spacious as an area of 1238 acres at first appeared, new houses and streets were constructed on the outskirts, and in 1827 a local census found 1329 living "without the bounds, but on village allotment within the proposed lines."<sup>226</sup> Though ardently desired by many citizens, renewed expansion waited upon the grant of a city charter in 1834.<sup>227</sup>



New England Yankees, seasoned by a longer or shorter residence in New York State, comprised the predominant village stock. The small

<sup>220</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>221</sup> *Telegraph*, May 16, 1826.

<sup>222</sup> Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828* (Edinburgh, 1829), pp. 36-38.

<sup>223</sup> *Telegraph*, Jan. 14, Apr. 1, 1823.

<sup>224</sup> *Telegraph*, Apr. 29, 1823; W. Earl Weller, "The Expanding Boundaries of Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 175-177; Spafford, *Gazetteer* (1824), pp. 189-191.

<sup>225</sup> Weller, "Development of the Charter . . . of Rochester," M.A. thesis, Univ. of Roch., pp. 176-177.

<sup>226</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, p. 138.

<sup>227</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 28, 1830.

number from Maryland and Pennsylvania would have been lost from view, save for a sprinkling of colored folk, had not their Episcopal predilection been supported by many Yorkers of long standing. A half-dozen Dutch names in the first *Directory* represented a still older New York strain, neither Yankee nor Episcopal in spirit, but equally proud of its American tradition.<sup>228</sup> A few families, hailing directly from Germany or Scandinavia, served as the advance guard of a migration only just beginning.<sup>229</sup> Larger but less distinguishable groups arrived from England and Scotland, possibly after a stopover in Canada or the East,<sup>230</sup> yet less than one out of twelve villagers of 1825 were classed as aliens.<sup>231</sup>

The most noticeable foreign group was the Irish, many of whom had come as canal laborers. Several of their families settled about the log cabin erected in 1817 by Rochester's Irish pioneer, James Dowling, on the river road to Carthage. Six years before that road was renamed St. Paul Street in 1829, the community known as Dublin<sup>232</sup>—a colorful if troublesome suburb—gained inclusion within the corporate limits. Though the Irish became the butt of many jokes in neighborhood taverns, some of the good-natured humor reverberating in the pages of local weeklies,<sup>233</sup> several young Irishmen of talent rose to positions of leadership. At least two Irish Catholic Fathers served their growing flock in Rochester during the twenties.<sup>234</sup> When the first daily paper appeared late in 1826, a young Irishman, Henry O'Reilly, arrived from New York as editor.<sup>235</sup> O'Reilly joined with his fellow countrymen in organizing a local Hibernian Society, a mutual benevolent organization which sought also to encourage naturalization and a full assumption of the responsibilities of citizenship.<sup>236</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Mrs. E. A. Handy, "The Dutch in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 65.

<sup>229</sup> Herman Plaefflin, *Hundert jährige Geschichte des Deutschtums von Rochester* (Rochester, 1915), pp. 22-24; R. B. Anderson, *The First Chapters of Norwegian Immigration* (Madison, 1895), pp. 62-70. Lars Larson, a member of the Norwegian settlement that located at the western edge of Monroe County in 1825, moved to Rochester the next year to engage in canal boatbuilding, and soon his home became a center for Norwegians migrating westward. *Album*, Jan. 3, 1826, gives a contemporary account of their plight.

<sup>230</sup> Marcus L. Hansen, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* (New Haven, 1940), I, 99-107.

<sup>231</sup> *Album*, Jan. 17, 1826. That is the percentage for Gates and Brighton, credited with 674 aliens in a total population of 8566.

<sup>232</sup> K. J. Dowling, "Dublin," R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 233-237; Samson Scrapbook, No. 41, p. 63.

<sup>233</sup> *Telegraph*, May 25, 1824.

<sup>234</sup> F. J. Zwierlein, "Catholics of Early Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 190-192.

<sup>235</sup> E. R. Foreman, "The Henry O'Reilly Documents," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 124-125; *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIV, 52-53.

<sup>236</sup> *Advertiser*, July 1, 1828. Fifteen names appeared on the committees connected with the organization of this society in Rochester.

Rochester's new settlers were but a small contingent of the migrants, both native and foreign, heading westward over the canal.<sup>237</sup> In Utica it was observed:

Scarcely a boat from the east passes without a number of families on board, with their household goods and farming utensils, bound to the "Genesee Country," "Ohio" or the "Michigan Territory." There is no method of ascertaining the number of this description of passengers on the canal, for they pay no toll, and are not reported to the Collector's office: but some estimation may be formed of the amount when it is known that wagons with emigrants are literally swept from the roads, formerly the great thoroughfare to the west. It is not uncommon to see from 30 to 40 women and children comfortably stowed away on one of the large covered canal boats, as chirp as a flock of black-birds.<sup>238</sup>

"As chirp as a flock of black-birds" was scarcely the best metaphor, since people seldom tear up their roots and bundle them into carpet bags in so light a mood. Many doubtless reached Rochester after setting out on a vaguely planned migration westward, but others followed the lead of friends or relatives. The mail bags were full of advice to prospective migrants. Occasionally a stranger would address a local editor<sup>239</sup> or Colonel Rochester himself, asking "whether it would be advisable for a young man (of respectable character & who can bring the best recommendation) to remove to Rochester to engage in Business of any Kind—and what *particular* business would be the most advantageous?"<sup>240</sup> Or a letter from the mill town to the home folks would read in part:

You will perhaps be surprised to receive a letter from me from this place. . . . After I wrote you I stayed some time in New York, but could find no stand. . . . I concluded to try my luck elsewhere, and accordingly came to this place—and have been very fortunate. I have rented a new store . . . [which] will be ready to occupy in about two weeks; when I shall put into it a good assortment of groceries & provisions and try my luck. . . . I tend store . . . until it is done, at the rate of \$16 a month.<sup>241</sup>

Great as was the influx of newcomers, the growth of Rochester sprang in part from the pioneers. With the ratio of births to deaths

<sup>237</sup> Assembly Documents (1827), p. 11; David M. Schneider, *The History of Public Welfare in New York State* (Chicago, 1938), pp. 130-139; Joseph Pickering, *Inquiries of an Emigrant* (London, 1832), p. 52. Pickering gives detailed advice on the facilities available for English emigrants at New York, Albany, and along the Erie Canal to Lockport, based on his own trip in 1824. *Album*, May 9, 1826. The first full season on the completed canal saw crude shacks erected at Buffalo to shelter them until boat passage to the West could be secured.

<sup>238</sup> *Telegraph*, May 25, 1824.

<sup>239</sup> Daniel McGlashen to Thurlow Weed, Albany, Nov. 7, 1823, Weed Papers.

<sup>240</sup> Thomas Shriver to Col. Rochester, Sandy Mount, Md., Feb. 15, 1824, Rochester Letters.

<sup>241</sup> A. Kasson to Andrew Root, Rochester, May 25, 1826, Autograph Letters.



better than two to one, 343 births were recorded in 1825, approximately a third of the increment that year. Though it was frequently remarked that no native had yet reached maturity,<sup>242</sup> the youngsters of the early days were growing up. In the summer of 1824, Hamlet Scrantom's third son, Edwin, took over the editorship of the *Republican*, successor to the *Gazette* on which he had served as apprentice a few years before.<sup>243</sup> In January, 1827, the young editor sat down and wrote a letter full of the balmy spirits of the town to his representative at Albany, none other than Abelard Reynolds, pioneer saddler and postmaster:

Business goes on, and briskly. There is an usual quantity of wheat bought . . . ; hammers clink, carts rattle, streetmen bawl, boys halloo, and cryers cry "hear ye," &c. Lawyers and doctors are thick as ever. Idlers and dandies strut as usual. The theaters, museums, pictures and other curiosities [are attended] about as abundantly as formerly, and men "in the full fruition of unrestrained liberty," pass to and fro, gathering substance and leaving "pomp and circumstance" behind them. The streets are crowded, now 'tis sleighing, from one end to the other. I counted a day or two since 150 teams in and about the streets of Buffalo, Carroll, and Exchange. Your business at the P. O. goes on as usual. . . . I saw [your clerk] Stoddard collecting a few days since and I thought he made a good fist at it. Money was never more scarce than now, when every merchant seems making remittances. But it will be better. The canal will open in less than two months and that will create a new era in the affairs of men and things. How does the business of legislation suit you? Methinks you are somewhat lost. You could easier tell a man whether his ticket was a blank or a prize than rise on the assembly floor. . . .

Enos Stone sold upwards of 100 acres of land near where he lives, not including his present homestead, to Messrs. Peck, Bissell and Riley, for \$35,000. They are apportioning [it] into village lots. Stebbins and Cuyer . . . are selling off lots. . . . I bought two lots there for \$200 each. They will now rise. They are selling rapidly. . . . F. H. Cuming has sold his brick house to A. Samson for \$3,500. . . .

Had you as soon send me your name for the note I spoke to you of? My brother [Elbert] will secure you. . . . I will remember it, as I ought, in gratitude. I call upon you with reluctance, but aware as I am that not the least injury can or shall come on you. I shall be proud to consider you a friend and one indeed. Please draw a note for 12 months jointly and severally for \$200, sign and send to me, and much oblige your very

Grateful Friend,  
E. Scrantom<sup>244</sup>

The reply proved equally revealing of the spirit of Rochester's founders, for in the midst of much reckless optimism there ever re-

<sup>242</sup> *Album*, Jan. 17, 1826.

<sup>243</sup> Hamlet Scrantom, *Journal*, entry of July 27 and Aug. 2, 1824, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>244</sup> Edwin Scrantom to Abelard Reynolds, Rochester, Jan. 27, 1827, Edwin Scrantom Letters, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

mained a desire for restraint. The request for a loan was granted after security was received, but a note of warning was sounded:

I have always had the utmost confidence in the ultimate success and consequences of our Village, the numerous opinions to the contrary notwithstanding. There is however in all human events, a point beyond which we ought not, we cannot go, and such I am fearful is the extravagant land speculations now going on in Rochester. The present purchasers will no doubt make money by their operation, but that a reaction will be the final result of this persevering, chimerical project there cannot remain a doubt, and how far that will effect, and impede the flourishing condition of our famous village it is difficult for me to predick.<sup>245</sup>

Only a few months later Abelard Reynolds put such doubts aside and embarked upon the construction of the Arcade, the most extensive and elegant commercial structure in western New York in that day.<sup>246</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Abelard Reynolds to Edwin Scrantom, Albany, Feb. 3, 1827.

<sup>246</sup> Amy H. Coughton, "Historic Reynolds Arcade," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VIII, 97-99.

## CHAPTER V

### ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOM TOWN

1817-1828

**T**RADITIONAL ATTITUDES and conflicting aspirations complicated the establishment of Rochester's civic and institutional functions. Though economic factors exerted their influence, the most important developments arose from the increased complexity of the community's affairs. Repeated efforts to establish in Rochester the close-knit village patterns familiar in the communities back East met scant success. Before it could be properly groomed according to Yankee standards, the growing settlement was to burst the civic and cultural as well as the economic buttons off its ill-fitting village frock and emerge as the strutting "Young Lion of the West."

#### EARLY CIVIC PROBLEMS AND REGULATIONS

The village quickly discovered the urgent necessity for a careful regulation of its affairs, but the lack of precedents for such forthright action as the problems of the community demanded seriously handicapped the authorities. Villages simply had not grown up so rapidly, and it seemed unwise to assume the increased powers the town's size and activity required. Nevertheless, numerous Yankee mores were incorporated in the bylaws, though experience usually forced their modification.

The original charter of 1817 provided a form of government similar to that of other recently incorporated villages modelled on the New England town.<sup>1</sup> Chief authority resided in the town meeting, which elected seventeen officers (including five trustees), voted necessary taxes not to exceed \$1000 a year, and exercised other limited powers. The trustees had authority to adopt bylaws regulating fire hazards, nuisances, streets, markets, and some forty related matters of public concern. A village president presided over the meeting of the trustees as well as those of the "freeholders and inhabitants qualified to vote for

<sup>1</sup>Weller, "Development of the Charter . . . of Rochester," pp. 13-24. See also John F. Sly, *Town Government in Massachusetts: 1620-1930* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 93-103; Ernest S. Griffith, *History of American City Government: The Colonial Period* (New York, 1938), pp. 75-125.

members of assembly."<sup>2</sup> Scarcely more than one hundred were eligible to attend the public meetings in 1817, yet their number approached one thousand by 1823—a result of the town's growth and the more liberal state franchise.

The board of trustees hastened at its early meetings to adopt the customary village regulations. Thus the first bylaws declared that the public highways should neither be cluttered with building materials nor used for the racing of horses. Fines were prescribed for permitting hogs or cows to run at large or for throwing dead animals into the streets. The fire hazard prompted the requirement that each house should be equipped with a fire bucket, that chimneys and stove pipes should be kept clean. No hunting or firing of guns and no daylight bathing in the river or mill races were tolerated within the village limits. Licenses were required to sell liquor or slaughter animals within the bounds.<sup>3</sup>

Several of these problems soon demanded further action. The inhabitants voted \$350 for general expenses and necessary village improvements, such as books for the village records, fire hooks and ladders to supplement the efforts of the bucket brigade, and a ditch to drain the swamp back of Christopher's tavern.<sup>4</sup> A secure pound was needed for stray cattle pending the collection of fines against the owners.<sup>5</sup> Early in October the trustees appointed a fire company to replace the unorganized citizens' bucket brigade; similar action created a citizens' night patrol six months later.<sup>6</sup> But before the village could function satisfactorily it required an official seal, and the proper symbol for an enterprising town appeared to be an arm and a hammer.<sup>7</sup>



The simple solutions and modest expenditures of the first year soon proved inadequate. Not only did each of the above functions quickly develop into a major village activity, but new problems pressed for solution. As the time and energy required of the various officers made some compensation desirable, fees were prescribed for most services, while an honorarium of \$10 a year was provided for each trustee. The

<sup>2</sup> The constitution of 1777 limited the electorate to male inhabitants of one year's residence in one county who possessed a freehold valued at £20 or rented a tenement for 40 shillings and paid taxes to the state.

<sup>3</sup> "Records of the Doings of the Trustees of the Village of Rochester," MS, June 2, 1817, Film copy in Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>4</sup> "Records of the Doings of the Inhabitants of the Village of Rochester," MS, June 10, 1817, Film copy in Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>5</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 31, 1817.

<sup>6</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Oct. 9, 1817; May 7, 1818.

<sup>7</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Oct. 9, 1817. The Village Seal remained authoritative until 1834, when the newly established City Council adopted in its place the official seal of the Mayor's Court. See (Edward R. Foreman) "The Official Seal of Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 341-343.

tax voted for the second year reached the \$1000 statutory maximum.<sup>8</sup> Minor revisions in the bylaws were voted from time to time, but not until 1824 was a basic amendment of the charter seriously urged, though it did seem fitting to drop the "ville" from the town's name in 1822.<sup>9</sup>

The fire hazard proved to be the most urgent village concern. The burning of Francis Brown's mill early in 1818<sup>10</sup> spurred the inhabitants to vote the purchase of a "fire engine"—a hand pump attached to a tank fed by the bucket brigade.<sup>11</sup> When the first real test came in December, 1819, the stream of water could not reach the second story, and by morning several buildings near the Four Corners, including the first newspaper office, had gone up in smoke.<sup>12</sup> The trustees promptly ordered householders to provide one fire bucket for every two fireplaces and a ladder sufficient to reach the top of the building. A small shed housed the fire engine on the public square until that site was chosen for the courthouse, when a new location was selected in the meadow between the Reynolds and Christopher taverns. A lane, opening into Carroll (State) Street, provided access to the public "reservoir" fed by a log "aqueduct" which carried the overflow of the Red Mill thirty rods north to a central water trough for the use of both fire fighters and thirsty horses.<sup>13</sup>

The record of a half-dozen fires in 1821 was reduced by vigilant care during the next year,<sup>14</sup> but by 1823 it became evident that one gasping hand pump would no longer suffice. The inhabitants convened that December to consider the trustees' recommendations for two new engines, a length of leather hose, and a set of ladders mounted on wheels. Though advocates of economy cut the order to one new engine and a ladder truck,<sup>15</sup> a second fire company soon appeared, engendering friction which called for the appointment of a fire chief two years later. More vigorous action waited upon further amendment of the charter.<sup>16</sup>

The character of several early fires roused suspicions of incendiarism, suggesting the need for an efficient police. As the citizen's patrol was not giving full satisfaction, many of its members sought release from

<sup>8</sup> "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," May 4, 1818.

<sup>9</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 8, 1823; *N. Y. Laws of 1822*, Ch. 192.

<sup>10</sup> *Ontario Repository*, May 5, 1818; *Rochester Telegraph*, Jan. 19, 1819.

<sup>11</sup> "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," May 4, 1818.

<sup>12</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 7, 1819.

<sup>13</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 9, 1819, May, June 22, 1820; "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," Dec. 20, 1819, Nov. 29, 1820, May 7, 1821; *Charter, By-Laws and History of the Rochester Fire Department from 1817 to 1882* (Rochester, 1882).

<sup>14</sup> Newspaper Index, Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>15</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 12, 1823; "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," Dec. 11, 1823, Jan. 3, 1824; *Telegraph*, Feb. 17, 1824.

<sup>16</sup> *History of the Rochester Fire Department*, p. 37.

their thankless responsibilities. Accordingly in December, 1819, the inhabitants voted \$80 to employ a night watch for as many months as the fund would allow.<sup>17</sup> Similar appropriations in successive winters apparently achieved preventive results, for no major offense was reported in the village until August, 1821, when a suspected burglar was frightened away from Hart and Saxton's store at the Four Corners.<sup>18</sup>

The creation of Monroe County with its seat in Rochester and the construction of a jail at a cost of \$3674<sup>19</sup> focused attention on the crime problem. At least thirty criminal sentences were handed down to various major and minor offenders within the county by the Circuit Court in 1823 and 1824.<sup>20</sup> Popular concern over a convict force laboring on the aqueduct increased the expenditure for the night watch to \$200, permitting the employ of four watchmen in 1823.<sup>21</sup> Escapes from the jail and from the convict camp added to the anxiety.<sup>22</sup> One local editor declared that "probably no place in the Union the size of Rochester is so much infested with the dregs and outcasts of society as this village."<sup>23</sup> Following a popular fad of the day, a group of citizens petitioned the legislature for authority to establish a "stepping mill" in the village,<sup>24</sup> though nothing came of that proposal. As it no longer appeared safe to dispense with a watch during the warm months, a Vigilant Society, formed by a score of young men, volunteered to make the nightly rounds during the balmy season at no expense to the town.<sup>25</sup> It was rapidly becoming evident that additional outlays could not long be delayed.

Centers for the disorderly elements appeared in the numerous groceries and gaming rooms, prompting the suggestion that the village strike this evil at the source by refusing or limiting licenses.<sup>26</sup> An attempt in 1817 to collect fees from the groceries proved so ineffective, however, that fines had to be levied two years later on those operating without permits.<sup>27</sup> In 1823 grocery licenses were standardized at \$10 a year, and \$25 fees were collected for each billiard table and ninepin alley. For \$10 a showman acquired permission to perform in the village for

<sup>17</sup> *Telegraph*, July 28, 1818; "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," Dec. 20, 1819.

<sup>18</sup> *Telegraph*, Aug. 21, 1821.

<sup>19</sup> William F. Peck, *History of the Police Department of Rochester* (Rochester, 1903), p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 23, Sept. 14, 1824; Jan. 25, Feb. 22, 1825.

<sup>21</sup> "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," June 24, 1822.

<sup>22</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Sept. 25, 1821; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 18, 1828.

<sup>23</sup> *Telegraph*, Feb. 10, 1824.

<sup>24</sup> N. Y. Assembly *Journal* (1824), pp. 585, 684; Schneider, *Public Welfare in New York State*, pp. 150-155.

<sup>25</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 16, 1824.

<sup>26</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Aug. 19, Sept. 5, 1826.

<sup>27</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 4, 1819; May 4, 13, 1820; July 6, 1821.

one week or less.<sup>28</sup> The conviction that billiard tables and ninepin alleys contributed to the increase of crime and pauperism impelled the trustees, in 1825, to refuse all licenses and to resort instead to the practice of fining those who maintained them at the rate of three dollars a month.<sup>29</sup>

Public health precautions became more necessary with the community's growth. As some of the swamps that originally covered much of the village site failed to dry up after the removal of the forest, many drains had to be dug.<sup>30</sup> The reputation of the Genesee Country for fever and ague spurred the drainage program, which became still more urgent as the better houses acquired cellars or basement kitchens. A regulation of 1823 directed that these must be kept dry.<sup>31</sup> When a case of smallpox appeared that year, the trustees paid for the patient's care in an isolated house east of the river, ambitiously designated as a "hospital" in the village records.<sup>32</sup> Rigid regulations about the disposal of refuse and the building of necessities helped in a measure to keep disease under control, except for the usual epidemics of whooping cough and measles among the children.<sup>33</sup> But the popular demand for the construction of a sewer down Buffalo Street had to await a grant of larger tax powers.<sup>34</sup>

A closely related problem was that of supplying fresh water. An old Indian spring proved sufficient until the summer of 1820, when several private wells were dug. The demand for public wells, put off by an increased flow at the spring that fall,<sup>35</sup> soon reappeared and with it came an abortive attempt to form a Rochester Aqueduct Association.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, encouragement to those who extended the use of private wells to their neighbors failed to relieve the village of dependence on enterprising water carriers.<sup>37</sup>

Among the requirements of the expanding community was a new burial ground. The rise in land value about the original plot, donated by Rochester, Fitzhugh, and Carroll, on Falls (Spring) Street, prompted the sale of that area and the purchase of a larger tract some distance out on Buffalo Street. Removal of the existing graves was financed out of the surplus, and still a sufficient balance remained for the purchase of a public hearse to carry the dead to their last resting place in proper

<sup>28</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 5, 1823.

<sup>29</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 16, 1825.

<sup>30</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 4, 1820; June 30, 1826.

<sup>31</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Feb. 5, 1823.

<sup>32</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Oct. 11, 1823; July 6, 1824; "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," Nov. 16, 1824.

<sup>33</sup> *Telegraph*, July 23, Aug. 13, 1822.

<sup>34</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 4, 1824.

<sup>35</sup> "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," Dec. 6, 1820.

<sup>36</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 17, 1822; Nov. 11, 1823; *Assembly Journal* (1823), pp. 733, 748; *Assembly Journal* (1824), p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 12, 1823; June 30, 1826.

state. The upkeep of the cemetery seemed assured from the sale of grave lots.<sup>38</sup>

Reconstruction of the Rochester bridge was a task the village hoped the newly formed county would undertake. After considerable agitation the legislature in 1823 granted the county authority to raise \$14,000 for that purpose, but when the village learned that one-fourth of the cost was to be levied against its property—valued at barely one-tenth of the county's total—a loud remonstrance occurred.<sup>39</sup> Delays ensued until authority for a modified plan of reconstruction arrived, enabling Elisha Johnson, the east-side promoter and engineer, to commence work under a \$6,000 contract shortly after the spring freshets in 1824. But Johnson's plan of extending the eastern abutment out to the original first pier brought protests from several west-side millers who feared the aggravation of river floods. Finally, by excavating from the river bed sufficient stone to compensate for the narrowed channel, the issue was temporarily side-stepped, and after considerable inconvenience the bridge reopened in December.<sup>40</sup>

The condition of the streets presented a most baffling problem. Since funds were lacking for street improvement, all that could be attempted in the early twenties was to provide for sidewalks. To this end the trustees in January, 1822, ordered property owners on the commercial sections of Buffalo and Carroll Streets to construct 12-foot walks in front of their properties. A railing with suitable hitching posts was to be erected near the outer edge, and the job was to be completed by May 10th. Though the time had to be extended a month and fines levied against two delinquents, the improvement was a boon to the village that summer. The only outlay by the trustees was \$150 for the crosswalks at the Four Corners.<sup>41</sup> Sidewalks were ordered extended along several of the lesser streets the next year, a regulation applied east of the river in 1824.<sup>42</sup> The only other street improvement during these years provided oil lamps at both ends of the bridge, to be lit on dark nights in order to safeguard late travelers from plunging into the river.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Oct. 18, 1821; Jan. 18, 1822; "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," May 7, 1821. The new cemetery was located on the site now occupied by the Rochester General Hospital.

<sup>39</sup> Monroe County Supervisors, "Proceedings, Oct. 12, 1822," *Proceedings, 1822-1840* (Rochester, 1892), p. 27; *Assembly Journal* (1823), pp. 522, 735; "Doings of the Trustees," Apr. 3, 1823; David H. Burr, *An Atlas of the State of New York* (New York, 1829), plate 45. The total real property valuation for the county in 1825 was \$4,478,820, while Brighton and Gates added up to \$1,263,900, not all in the village, of course.

<sup>40</sup> Dorothy S. Truesdale, "Historic Main Street Bridge," *Rochester History*, III, no. 2 (April, 1941), 5; *Telegraph*, Jan. 4, 1825.

<sup>41</sup> *Telegraph*, July 17, 1822; "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," June 24, 1822.

<sup>42</sup> "Doings of Trustees," Feb. 5, 1823, May 18, 1824.

<sup>43</sup> "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," Jan. 3, 1824.





The need for more adequate civic functions, resulting in large part from the town's rapid growth, inspired frequent demands for a city charter.<sup>44</sup> Several of the trustees, burdened with increased civic responsibilities, were heartily in favor of municipal status, notably Dr. Matthew Brown, whose years of service on the village board, together with his activities as the chief proprietor of Frankfort, had made him an outstanding Village Father. However, those who feared to delegate the taxing power to a group of aldermen dominated the public meeting held in December, 1825, when some three or four hundred citizens gathered to consider the issue.<sup>45</sup> An application was reluctantly endorsed for a revised village charter, dividing the town into five wards for the election of officers, raising the tax limit to \$2,000, and extending the powers of the trustees.<sup>46</sup>

The issue provoked a degree of levity on the part of one local editor who did not view the community's bounding growth with too much concern:

Although Rochester is in point of business the first village in the state, we are too young to ape the fashions or merit the name of a city. Our streets are neither paved nor lighted, we have no markets, no shipping, no theatres, or public gardens, no promenades for exquisites, and our aldermen would experience a great scarcity of turtle. Besides, as was remarked by one of the speakers at the meeting, "while Buffalo, & Brooklyn, & Utica are striving for city charters, to become a city can be considered *no great trick*."<sup>47</sup>

The more Rochesterians thought about it, the more they were convinced that to become a city was not their object—rather they desired a better village. When news arrived that the revised charter had passed the legislature, the same editor commented: "Heretofore, disorder has bid defiance to wholesome law, but the presumption now is, that a new state of things will take place."<sup>48</sup> Twenty-four village officers had to be elected from the several wards, and it was desirable, the editor continued, "that good and able men be chosen," since their authority now extended over a total of fifty-nine specific matters. That the object of improving the village, both physically and morally, had not been forgotten was evident from the inclusion of the power to build sewers as well as to regulate the sale of "spirituous liquors."<sup>49</sup>

Whatever the desires of the villagers, Rochester was rapidly develop-

<sup>44</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 28, 1824; Mar. 8, Apr. 26, 1825.

<sup>45</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Dec. 20, 1825.

<sup>46</sup> N. Y. *Laws of 1826*, Ch. 140; Weller, "Development of the Charter . . . of Rochester," pp. 26-38.

<sup>47</sup> *Album*, Dec. 27, 1825. See also, Griffith, *American City Government*, pp. 413-417, *passim*, for evidence of the hold of the town-meeting tradition among migrating Yankees.

<sup>48</sup> *Album*, Apr. 11, 1826.

<sup>49</sup> Weller, "Development of the Charter . . . of Rochester," pp. 31-33; *An Act*

ing the proportions and the problems of a small city. With a population nearing seven thousand in the summer of 1826, all rivals in the state west of Albany were surpassed—not only in numbers but also in the urgency of village affairs. The newly elected trustees, all save Matthew Brown, who was chosen president, being inexperienced, soon found themselves overburdened with pressing problems. In place of the leisurely meetings held once every two or three months during previous years, the trustees gathered for busy sessions every week or so and sometimes twice a week. For this extensive public service they received the modest reward of \$15 a year, yet the dignities of the office were still eagerly sought by leading citizens.<sup>50</sup>

The trustees' first task was to formulate a policy respecting groceries and theatrical performances. The specific control over these affairs granted by the charter prompted early applications for licenses, and the former device of laying the petitions on the table would not suffice while the press was calling for action.<sup>51</sup> With a new theater in process of construction, supported by local capital, and a traveling performer requesting leave to exhibit his caravan of living animals in the old circus building,<sup>52</sup> the prospect that other showmen would soon visit the most thriving town west of Albany forced a decision.

Unfortunately the trustees were scarcely in agreement themselves. After an attempt to ban theater licenses was voted down, two to one, a modified ordinance fixed the annual license fee at \$150 and levied fines of \$25 against the management and \$5 against each performer for every unauthorized performance.<sup>53</sup> Unable to afford a year's license, the proprietor of the new Rochester Theater determined to defy the law.<sup>54</sup> A suit to collect the prescribed penalties ended, after much argument, in a compromise, permitting the operation of the theater Monday through Friday at \$30 a week.<sup>55</sup> The village was not as completely protected from questionable influences as some desired,<sup>56</sup> but pleasure was expressed over the fact that "many who are in a measure non-residents among us may contribute to the improvement of our Village, and thereby lighten the tax on the actual residents."<sup>57</sup>

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*of Incorporation of the Village of Rochester, Together with the By Laws & Ordinances of the Board of Trustees* (Rochester, 1826).

<sup>50</sup> The new board was comprised of Matthew Brown, president, William Brewster, Vincent Mathews, John Mastick, and Giles Bolton.

<sup>51</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 18, 1826; *Album*, Apr. 25, 1826.

<sup>52</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Mar. 7, 11, Apr. 4, 1826; *Album*, Apr. 25, 1826; "Doings of the Trustees," May 23, 1826.

<sup>53</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 1, 3, 1826; *Act of Incorporation and By-Laws* (1826), pp. 27-29.

<sup>54</sup> *Monroe Republican*, June 13, 1826.

<sup>55</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 6, 8, 10, Dec. 12, 1826.

<sup>56</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Aug. 19, Dec. 5, 1826.

<sup>57</sup> *Album*, Apr. 25, 1826.

Ordinances against billiard tables and other gambling devices and for the regulation of groceries produced a similar division of opinion.<sup>58</sup> The community had grown to the point where the number of travelers and other strangers thronging the taverns, eager to relax around billiard tables or to purchase whiskey even on the Sabbath, made it difficult for the respectable villagers to maintain all the civic regulations. It proved particularly difficult to enforce the Sabbath closing rule on groceries or to subdue the canal boatmen who passed through Rochester on that day.<sup>59</sup> Groceries were now encountered at almost every turn. In 1827 nearly a hundred licenses were granted, netting, together with the occasional fines, a considerable sum for the treasury.<sup>60</sup> The issue was destined to arouse more positive action in the years ahead.



Meanwhile, other problems pressed for attention. The destruction of half a dozen or so buildings each year in the mid-twenties kept the fire hazard constantly before the trustees.<sup>61</sup> The second ordinance adopted under the new powers in 1826 prescribed more stringent regulations of fireplaces and other heating arrangements and directed the fire wardens to make periodic inspections.<sup>62</sup> When two wardens reported the existence of numerous substandard flues in their wards, the village attorney brought suit against their owners, prompting householders to employ chimney sweeps.<sup>63</sup> Under the direction of Fire Chief Samuel Works, the fire companies were reorganized, but the conviction that the major improvement needed was a new fire engine finally led the inhabitants to vote \$1000 for its purchase. Everard Peck, journeying to New York and Philadelphia in search of the best model, returned in October, 1827, with an engine purchased at the latter place for \$716 and three hundred feet of leather hose for \$216. A third engine company quickly formed, and the villagers gathered at nine o'clock one fall morning to witness a demonstration of their fire-fighting equipment on Mumford's Meadow above the main falls.<sup>64</sup> A more tragic demonstration occurred two months later when Peck's paper mill caught fire, resulting in the first Rochester fireman's fatality and the loss of the building.<sup>65</sup>

Increased activity marked several other civic functions. The night watch was enlarged to ten men in 1827, each patrolling his ward for

<sup>58</sup> *Ordinances* (1826), pp. 27, 31, 33.

<sup>59</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 8, 1825; *Rochester Observer*, Mar. 17, 1827, July 22, 1828.

<sup>60</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 8, 23, 1827; and *passim*.

<sup>61</sup> The Newspaper Index lists 19 homes, shops, and mills destroyed during 1825, 1826, and 1827.

<sup>62</sup> *Ordinances* (1826), pp. 20-24.

<sup>63</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 31, 1826; Dec. 4, 1827.

<sup>64</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 29, July 3, Oct. 23, 27, 1827.

<sup>65</sup> James H. Kelly, *History of the Rochester Fire Department*, p. 38; *Telegraph*, Dec. 22, 1827.

half the night and receiving \$10 a month for the service.<sup>66</sup> The trustees subsidized the digging of half a dozen private wells, making them available to public use, and opened two others at central points on public property.<sup>67</sup> The complaints of numerous renters prompted an ordinance directing the construction of stone vaults under the necessities required on all occupied properties; and the trustees further stipulated that a peck of lime must be dumped into each vault once a month.<sup>68</sup> Among those fined for maintaining pig sties was Russel Ensworth, whose hog pen back of his tavern at the Four Corners was declared a public nuisance.<sup>69</sup> Though health expenditures occasionally proved necessary, a board of health was not appointed until January, 1828.<sup>70</sup> The overabundance of peddlers and the frequent employ of lads to cry out the wares of new merchants prompted licensing regulations which limited the number and required the use of a bell instead of a horn as less likely to frighten passing teams.<sup>71</sup>

A new problem developed as numerous teamsters crowded the streets of the thriving market town with loads of hay, grain, and other produce. Every attempt to prescribe the points at which such wagons should stand while awaiting buyers brought protests from lot owners,<sup>72</sup> and the only acceptable stand for market wagons appeared to be near the west end of the bridge.<sup>73</sup> The desirability of establishing a public market there was further emphasized by complaints concerning the two slaughterhouses located within the town with inadequate sewerage facilities.<sup>74</sup> Elisha Johnson, who had but recently completed the reconstruction of the central bridge, proposed that a market be erected at its northwest corner extending out over the river to the first pier, thus providing ample room near an abundant supply of water for cleaning the stalls. A committee, reporting in favor of this plan, recommended that the bridge piers be extended seventy feet down the river to support the market.<sup>75</sup> The inhabitants, quickly approving the recommendation, authorized an expenditure of \$1000.<sup>76</sup>

In more than one respect the market proved to be a focal point in the town's development. With its construction a bold step was taken in advancing private property rights and street shops out over the river.

<sup>66</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Nov. 20, 1827.

<sup>67</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 30, July 10, Dec. 12, 1826; Aug. 7, 14, Dec. 4, 1827.

<sup>68</sup> *Ordinances* (1826), pp. 24-25, 31.

<sup>69</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Sept. 5, 1826.

<sup>70</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Sept. 28, 1826; Apr. 17, Jan. 15, 1828.

<sup>71</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 19, July 10, 1826; July 10, 1827.

<sup>72</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Sept. 5, 12, 26, 1826.

<sup>73</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Aug. 14, 1826.

<sup>74</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 29, Aug. 19, 1826.

<sup>75</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Sept. 5, 19, 1826.

<sup>76</sup> "Records . . . of the Inhabitants," July 8, 1826; *Advertiser*, July 8, 1828.

The village paid Charles H. Carroll \$200 for his riparian rights to the site, thus prejudicing its case against other encroachments soon made from the east bank.<sup>77</sup> Though it was nearly half a century before the river was blotted from sight in Main Street, the process of joining the two parts of the town was considerably hastened by the market building.

The market provided a fiscal turning point as well, for the \$1000 authorized would not even cover the contract cost, compelling the trustees to negotiate their first sizable loan. Before the work was completed the expenditure reached \$3000, and, denied the necessary assessment, the trustees sold market stock to cover the outlay.<sup>78</sup> All the available stalls were leased before the structure opened early in May, 1827, requiring a clerk to supervise the market's affairs. With huckstering and butchering in other parts of the town prohibited, Rochester acquired a central mart for the convenience of the butchers and produce merchants of the surrounding territory.<sup>79</sup> Its standing as a market town was measurably enhanced.

Less striking perhaps, but more extensive and necessary, were the street and sewer developments launched under the second charter. The Buffalo Street sewer, started in 1824, was pressed forward with vigor in the summer of 1826.<sup>80</sup> Though little more than a shallow ditch with flagstone sides and capping,<sup>81</sup> the sewer diverted surface water from the backyard cesspools which were proving to be undesirable neighbors to the public wells. By the end of 1827, more than a mile and a half of sewers or drains had been constructed, and a discharge opened into the river below the bridge.<sup>82</sup> The expense, as in the case of the sidewalks, fell on adjacent property holders, though not without frequent protests from those who preferred the simple methods of the past.<sup>83</sup> Approximately two miles of additional sidewalks were constructed in 1827, but scarcely a beginning had yet been made at the task of paving the streets.<sup>84</sup>

Authority to proceed with further street improvements was finally granted by an amendment to the charter early in 1828.<sup>85</sup> Mill Street (renamed Exchange Street because the busy commercial activity near the canal had forced the migration of many mills to the main falls

<sup>77</sup> Truesdale, "Main Street Bridge," pp. 7ff.

<sup>78</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Oct. 28, 31, 1826; Jan. 23, 1827.

<sup>79</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 2, 5, 29, 1827.

<sup>80</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 10, 1826.

<sup>81</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 8, June 19, July 20, 1827. The specifications for these sewers varied; one called for a ditch one foot in width lined to a height of 18 inches and covered at least 15 inches above the capping. A contractor engaged to construct a slightly larger sewer at the rate of \$11 per rod.

<sup>82</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, pp. 139, 144.

<sup>83</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Aug. 17, 1827.

<sup>84</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 26, 1827; *Rochester in 1827*, p. 139.

<sup>85</sup> *N. Y. Laws of 1828*, ch. 120; "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 15, 1828.

where a new Mill Street was laid out) was forthwith extended south through Colonel Rochester's old pear orchard to the boundary of the village.<sup>86</sup> Court Street was opened from Exchange Street eastward in line with the new bridge that had been erected by subscription south of the aqueduct in 1826, connecting on the east side with the two roads to Pittsford.<sup>87</sup> Several new sewers were opened, and rock broken in the jail yard was dumped into the more obvious mud holes which had brought the town an unpleasant notoriety.<sup>88</sup> Labor for such repairs came from male residents, each required to give two days a year and an additional day for every \$300 in real property within the limits.<sup>89</sup>

The sprawling growth of the town compelled the trustees to correct the duplication of street names in 1828.<sup>90</sup> Other changes marked the shifting functions of varied areas. Falls Street was renamed Spring Street because the blasting of the upper falls to facilitate the free flow of the river under the aqueduct had left the main falls at the other end of town the only obvious cataract in the village. Aqueduct Street was laid out through the old mill yard, terminating at the western end of that massive stone structure. River Street on the east side (which continued north as Market Street and Clyde Street) was renamed St. Paul Street in recognition of the imposing second Episcopal church being erected on its route. Finally, at the close of the year, it was considered appropriate to place street signs at prominent corners for the convenience of strangers seeking their way about.<sup>91</sup>

#### RUDIMENTS OF CULTURE

Closely related to the emerging civic functions were the public and private schools and other agencies designed to provide the community with cultural facilities. The booming twenties witnessed the establishment of many such institutions, and as the decade advanced the narrow village horizon of several of the early organizations was considerably broadened. Yet the increased size and complexity of the community made the accomplishments appear small and inadequate until, in the thirties, a powerful quickening of spirit brought fresh vitality to many local societies.

The common district schools represented the community's earliest public efforts in the cultural field. Unfortunately, as the district schools sprang from the decentralized township authority, the occasional efforts of the village or the state to supply educational leadership produced

<sup>86</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 8, 1828.

<sup>87</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Aug. 12, 1828.

<sup>88</sup> *Rochester Gem and Ladies Amulet*, Mar. 27, 1830.

<sup>89</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 17, 1828.

<sup>90</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 15, 1828. Court, Franklin, and Washington streets had each appeared in duplicate.

<sup>91</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 11, 1828.

few results during the decade. The rapid increase in the number of children of school age in the village, by overcrowding the school buildings, aggravated the problem of dealing with those unable to pay the small tuition fees.<sup>92</sup> The long fight to convert these humble institutions into useful community agencies started during the twenties, but real achievements waited upon the bolder inspiration and larger resources of later decades.

The four district schools operating within the settlement at the start of the decade doubled in number before its close, but their enrollment increased much more rapidly. Already in 1821 Gates Districts 2 and 10 in Rochester numbered 190 and 75 scholars respectively, while east of the river Brighton Districts 4 and 8 reported 137 and 78 children in East Rochester and Carthage.<sup>93</sup> These would have been large enrollments indeed for the one-room schools of the day had all sought to attend each of the three or four terms offered during the year. By 1827 when the children of school age within the village were approaching the two thousand mark, the eight or ten district schools were luckily supplemented by a similar array of private institutions, yet the educational achievements remained far from satisfactory.<sup>94</sup>

Gates District Number 2 (to be renamed Rochester Number 1 in 1835) early encountered a serious problem of overcrowding. Though the trustees were instructed by a district meeting in May, 1820, to enlarge the building, no authority to raise the necessary fund was granted. When an adjourned meeting reconsidered the problem and voted instead that an additional room should be rented, again no funds were provided, so that a third meeting was necessary before a \$20 assessment was voted for this purpose. The trustees were authorized to admit scholars unable to pay tuition as long as the payments collected from the others would meet the expense of hiring the two teachers.<sup>95</sup>

A popular educational reform of the day promised for a time to solve Rochester's problems. The Lancastrian School Society of New York City had recently opened a large school where each teacher supervised a dozen or so student-monitors engaged in training two hundred or more pupils. The opportunity to provide schooling to all children with great economy in teachers' salaries appealed to the advocates of better school facilities who met at Ensworth's tavern to discuss the proposal.<sup>96</sup> Yet a charter for such a society, incorporating Gates Districts

<sup>92</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 28, 1819.

<sup>93</sup> "Common School Returns from the Towns of Gates and Brighton for 1820/21," MS, N. Y. State Library, photostat copies, Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>94</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, pp. 110, 138; *Assembly Journal* (1824), Appendix A, pp. 10-11; *Journal* (1825), Appendix B, p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> "Records of Gates School District No. 2" (1820-1847), May 6, Sept. 29, Oct. 9, 1820, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>96</sup> *Telegraph*, Sept. 26, Oct. 31, Nov. 7, 1820; *Album*, Jan. 16, 1821.

2 and 10 and Brighton Number 4 as a union school, though submitted to the legislature by Colonel Rochester in 1821, failed of adoption, and the first attempt to unify the educational facilities of Rochester came to naught.<sup>97</sup>

Blocked in that direction, Gates District Number 2 faced increasingly difficult problems. The tax voted in 1824 rose to \$100, half of it earmarked for building repairs and a stove. The teacher, now aided by a regular assistant, shared the niggardly state funds which supplemented the tuition fees paid by some of the pupils. Overcrowding became more critical, and though a resolution favoring a new building was lost in 1826 when a division of the district was proposed, the relief afforded by that action a year later proved only temporary. So serious was the wear and tear on the flimsy structure that the trustees determined in 1826 to restrict its use to school purposes. Several years rolled by before the problem was forthrightly attacked.<sup>98</sup>



The influx of settlers brought a group of young men eager to serve for a season or two as village schoolmasters. When their services were not required in the district schools, the more energetic established private schools, several of which flourished for successive years. None of the first crop survived the twenties, yet for a time they provided much of the elementary and all of the secondary education available in the village.

Late in 1818 the pioneer "female academy" of Rochester opened on Mill (Exchange) Street, a short step from Colonel Rochester's homestead, with Miss Maria Allyn as sole instructor. The girls enrolled gave such a creditable account of themselves at quarterly public examinations that the school enjoyed a ready patronage for several years.<sup>99</sup> Apparently better times had arrived for many of the villagers, enabling them to pay the fees of five dollars each term. Thus in 1820 Hamlet Scrantom, with his boys apprenticed to various local tradesmen, not only decided against keeping boarders that summer, but sent Hannah and Jane to the academy. Colonel Rochester's youngest daughter, Cornelia, likewise enrolled.<sup>100</sup>

It is doubtful whether Miss Allyn's academy merited such a designa-

<sup>97</sup> "Bill to Incorporate a Lancastrian School in Rochester," MS; Col. Rochester to Abelard Reynolds, Jan. 24, Feb. 7, 1821, Rochester Letters.

<sup>98</sup> Brighton District No. 2, "Record Book," May 1, Oct. 30, 1824, May 6, 1826, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; A. Laura McGregor, "The Early History of the Rochester Public Schools," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 37-41.

<sup>99</sup> William F. Peck, *Semi-Centennial History of Rochester* (Syracuse, 1884), pp. 299-300; *Telegraph*, Mar. 30, Aug. 10, 1819; Aug. 29, 1820; Apr. 2, 1822.

<sup>100</sup> Hamlet Scrantom to his father, July 8, 1820, Samson Note Book, IX, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Nathaniel Rochester's receipt for \$5 paid for Cornelia, one term under Maria Allyn, Aug. 4, 1819, Rochester Letters.



tion, but facilities for the higher instruction of young men appeared during the fall of 1820. The *Telegraph* welcomed the school of Mr. Forman as offering "the higher branches of education," adding that "the want of a school of this description has long been felt in this neighborhood."<sup>101</sup> An advertisement announced courses in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, English, philosophy, astronomy, arithmetic, and geography, as well as reading and writing.<sup>102</sup> Two additional teachers, P. P. Fairchild and Thomas A. Filer, were associated with this school. Evidently the demand of tradesmen for clerks and apprentices still attracted the older boys of the village into vocational channels, for nothing further is heard of Mr. Forman, while Fairchild and Filer soon shifted into the more promising field of select schools for girls.<sup>103</sup>

Other ventures followed in quick succession. A graduate of Middlebury College selected Rochester for a grammar school in 1821,<sup>104</sup> two years before the Quaker schoolteacher, Silas Cornell, arrived with a pair of globes and a complete set of maps of the world.<sup>105</sup> In 1825 the Reverend Comfort Williams offered to give college preparatory lessons in his home.<sup>106</sup> Writing academies for adults ran frequent advertisements,<sup>107</sup> as did evening schools ready to accommodate those desiring lessons in fencing, the use of the rifle, surveying, architecture, music and dancing.<sup>108</sup>

The failure of most of these private schools to continue active beyond a few months did not result from a lack of children of school age, but from the inability of the majority of parents to pay the fees.<sup>109</sup> The continued inflow of settlers and the arrival of the families of the canal builders increased the number of children unable to pay even the modest rates demanded by the district schools. To meet this situation, several young matrons of the village joined early in 1821 to open a charity

<sup>101</sup> *Telegraph*, Aug. 8, 1820.

<sup>102</sup> *Telegraph*, Aug. 8, 1820.

<sup>103</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 5, 1820, Apr. 23, May 21, 1822, Dec. 23, 1823. Filer is listed as a teacher as late as 1827 in the first village *Directory*. Cornelia and Louisa Rochester attended this school in 1821 and 1822, paying \$3 for tuition each quarter and 50 cents for wood for the season. Nathaniel Rochester, receipt, Rochester Letters.

<sup>104</sup> *Telegraph*, Aug. 7, 1821.

<sup>105</sup> *Telegraph*, Nov. 11, 1823.

<sup>106</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 8, 1825.

<sup>107</sup> *Telegraph*, Apr. 2, 1822; Dec. 23, 1823; Dec. 28, 1824.

<sup>108</sup> *Telegraph*, Jan. 20, Nov. 23, 1824; *Monroe Republican*, Oct. 4, 1825.

<sup>109</sup> Peck, *Semi-Centennial History*, pp. 300-314. George S. Riley, author of the chapter on Rochester schools, lists many school teachers as active here between 1818 and 1830, but the names of at least a score of them do not appear in any of the *Directories*. Most of them were young ladies whose energies were no doubt soon diverted into the home. Only a few names reappear as school teachers in successive *Directories*; most persistent were Thomas Filer, Zeenas Freeman, Mrs. Darrow, and Mrs. Emily Hotchkiss.

school in which they proposed to take turn about as instructors.<sup>110</sup> Their success during the first year was so encouraging that the ladies organized a Female Charitable Society to carry on the school and other services designed to ameliorate the condition of the town's poor. The school soon acquired regular teachers and moved to North Washington Street, where it attracted fifty or sixty indigent children each season.<sup>111</sup>

A similar attempt to extend educational rudiments to poor children, especially those forced to labor during the week, gave rise to the Sabbath school movement, which started locally with a class numbering thirty youngsters who gathered in the chapel on Sunday afternoons during the warm season of 1818. The project resumed the next summer, and again in 1820, when three classes were held in the district schoolhouses. A total of two hundred scholars assembled that August for the first Sabbath school graduation service held in the village.<sup>112</sup> Four such schools operated in 1822, providing instruction in reading and writing to over three hundred pupils on a non-sectarian basis. But the construction of churches by the various denominations soon supplied more congenial meeting places, and the non-sectarian character of these schools quickly disappeared.<sup>113</sup>

Still unsolved was the problem of providing more advanced instruction. The *Directory* of 1827 lamented the absence of an "institution of learning . . . an edifice built for science." It seemed humiliating no doubt to describe the Monroe Academy at Henrietta, ten miles south of Rochester, as the leading school in the county.<sup>114</sup> Canandaigua and Geneva academies or schools farther east were the resort of the more favored young men. Colonel Rochester's youngest son, Henry, spent three years at Geneva Academy, where he first met Isaac R. Elwood and other lads destined to head for Rochester after graduation.<sup>115</sup> While several leading Rochesterians responded to an appeal from the Geneva Academy for financial support,<sup>116</sup> the village, in the opinion of the first *Directory*, should plant its own "academic grove" and thus supply a proper "retreat for the muses" within the village limits.<sup>117</sup>

Agitation for a local academy rapidly gained ground. The assistance

<sup>110</sup> Esther Maria Ward Chapin, "Diaries and Letters," pp. 118ff., typed copy, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>111</sup> Amy H. Coughton, "The Rochester Female Charitable Society," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 68-69.

<sup>112</sup> *Rochester Gazette*, May 30, Aug. 15, 1820.

<sup>113</sup> *Telegraph*, June 28, 1825; "A History of the Sabbath Schools of Rochester," *The Penny Preacher*, Nov. 13, 1842.

<sup>114</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1827), p. 137.

<sup>115</sup> "Recollections of Henry E. Rochester," Harris Papers, No. 85, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Blake McKelvey, "On the Educational Frontier," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 13-16.

<sup>116</sup> *Album*, Feb. 14, Mar. 7, 1826.

<sup>117</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1827), p. 137.

offered by the state Regents provided encouragement.<sup>118</sup> Accordingly in 1827 the trustees of Brighton Districts 4 and 14 asked permission to incorporate a union school, and this time the legislature readily gave its consent. Shortly after a three-story building was completed at a cost of \$7500 on a lot secured from Enos Stone,<sup>119</sup> Professor S. D. Moore opened the school with forty scholars in August, 1828, attracting an enrollment of two hundred by the end of the quarter. Though tuition charges ranged between one and five dollars per quarter, the attendance grew to an average of three hundred for the second term.<sup>120</sup> By the close of its first full year the High School, as it was proudly named, was able to report a larger total number of students than any of the fifty-four other academies in the state. Most of this enrollment was in the elementary division, representing a swollen district school conducted on the monitorial system, but at least thirty-seven were classed as academy students, which was an encouraging start, and the Regents granted the school \$240.89 to assist in providing suitable instruction.<sup>121</sup>

If some Rochesterians in the twenties desired an "academic grove" for the village youth, others urged facilities for the intellectual life of adults. Two of the book stores maintained by local printers provided circulating libraries, while the occasional lists of books advertised for sale or circulation indicated a plentiful supply, particularly under the category of "Religion and Morality."<sup>122</sup> A debating society, which met regularly once a week in Filer's school room during the winter of 1820-21, probably disappeared before Dr. Levi Ward called interested citizens together at the Mansion House in the spring of 1822 to form the Rochester Library Company.<sup>123</sup> That library was apparently soon taken over by the book store of E. F. Marshall, where it accommodated members able to subscribe five dollars a year, but a "Forum where there is much debating & spouting, and which is more respectable than the old debating society" continued for a time.<sup>124</sup> The interest aroused at a special series of chemistry lectures given by Professor Amos Eaton of the Troy Polytechnic Institute in the fall of 1826 prompted the "Chemical Class," as it was called, to collect funds for a permanent library. Again Dr. Ward played an active part in the organization of

<sup>118</sup> *Album*, Aug. 22, 1826.

<sup>119</sup> *N. Y. Laws of 1827*, ch. 70.

<sup>120</sup> *Observer*, Feb. 27, 1829.

<sup>121</sup> *N. Y. State Regents Reports*, 1829 and 1830, see tables.

<sup>122</sup> *Telegraph*, Sept.-Oct., 1818; June 1, 1819; Apr. 2, 9, 1822; Nov. 26, 1823.

<sup>123</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 5, 1820; Apr. 2, 1822; Monroe County Clerk's "Miscellaneous Records," I, 53.

<sup>124</sup> Elisabeth Spencer to Joseph Spencer, Rochester, Jan. 30, 1823, Elisabeth Selden Spencer Eaton Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Elizabeth Selden Rogers, New York City.

the resulting Franklin Institute, which enrolled about seventy members and collected three hundred volumes.<sup>125</sup>

Since the facilities of these early libraries belonged to those able to pay the prescribed dues, many readers were excluded. Young Henry O'Reilly, who had enjoyed the use of a Mechanics Library in New York City a few years before, took the initiative in forming an Apprentice's Library in 1828 designed to serve the increasing number of young men of that class in the village. The new organization was promptly invited to share the room of the Franklin Institute, located at that time in the Court House, and the Reverend Joseph Penney welcomed the joint membership at the dedication of the new room in December, 1828, with an appropriate address on "Knowledge is Power."<sup>126</sup>

Before the Franklin Institute was split asunder by the furor of the Antimasonic controversy it performed another service for the village by ordering a portrait of DeWitt Clinton, the great patron of the canal, to be painted by George Catlin in New York. A most unfortunate accident marred this civic gesture when the artist's younger brother, who brought the painting to Rochester, was seized by cramps and drowned while swimming in the river below the falls.<sup>127</sup>

Earlier evidences of artistic interests in the village included exhibits by visiting painters at local taverns, while several portraitists advertised their services.<sup>128</sup> A studio was maintained for a year or two by a "portrait and ornamental" painter, Daniel Steele, who shortly found himself arraigned before the local court as a common cheat.<sup>129</sup> The most influential local artist, J. L. D. Mathies, maintained a gallery in conjunction with William Page of New York for several months in the mid-twenties. Mathies operated a soda fountain, sold musical instruments and provisions, and finally became a tavern keeper, but in the midst of his varied activities he was ever ready to bring out his palette when occasion offered. His most noteworthy achievement was a portrait of the aging chieftain, Red Jacket. It was especially fitting, now that the tribesmen had removed from their last settlements within the county,<sup>130</sup> that a

<sup>125</sup> *Telegraph*, Aug. 18, 1826; *Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1826; Blake McKelvey, "Early Library Developments In and Around Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVI, 20-29; "Amos Eaton," *Dictionary of American Biography*, V, 605-606.

<sup>126</sup> *Advertiser*, Oct. 28, Dec. 3, 5, 1828.

<sup>127</sup> Clifford M. Ulp, "Art and Artists in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 29-30; *Observer*, Sept. 26, 1828; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, III, 270.

<sup>128</sup> *Telegraph*, Dec. 10, 1822; Dec. 23, 1823; Oct. 12, 1824; *Monroe Republican*, Mar. 7, 1826. Messrs. M'Laughlin, Harding, Cable, and Ladd were among the early visiting artists.

<sup>129</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Aug. 1, 1826; *Advertiser*, July 18, 1828; *Democrat*, Oct. 20, 1840.

<sup>130</sup> William H. Samson's notes on the "Red Jacket" portrait, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Harris Papers, No. 65A. The last Indian community in the county resided on the Sutton farm until the close of the twenties.

portrait of their great orator should for many years grace the parlor of the Clinton (or Mansion) House. Indeed, that tavern, at least during the proprietorship of its artist-manager, provided a favorite resort for visiting artists.<sup>131</sup>

#### DENOMINATIONAL RIVALRIES

The community acted much more promptly and energetically in the development of its religious institutions. In place of the one modest frame church of 1818, the village ten years later boasted three handsome stone edifices and two of brick as well as three frame churches in temporary service, while two new stone buildings were already under construction. This considerable material progress manifested in a significant way the community's determination to establish its beliefs and traditions on a solid footing. The diversity of institutions likewise displayed a keen rivalry between and within the various sects, reflecting the community's economic and cultural cleavages. Though mutual objectives tended to draw the various church leaders together, differences in temperament and method frequently thrust them apart. Not until the end of the decade were these emotional powers redirected so as to become powerful driving forces behind a series of contemporary reform movements.

For several years the First Presbyterian Church was the dominant religious organization. Its simple frame building on Carroll Street cordially sheltered other church societies as well as the first Sabbath school and an occasional concert.<sup>132</sup> The Reverend Comfort Williams, the only resident pastor in the settlement until December, 1820, with a Yale and Andover training, ranked as one of the educated and respected clerics of western New York.<sup>133</sup> The congregation, growing from the sixteen founders of 1815 to ninety in 1821, included many of the more forceful of the increasing number of Yankee residents: Josiah Bissell, the Ely brothers, Dr. Frederick Backus, Moses Chapin, Dr. Levi Ward, and Everard Peck among others.

But the strong personalities of these men, stimulated by the dynamic community of which they were a part, made it increasingly difficult for them to worship in the same church. A few withdrew in 1818 to help found the Brighton Congregational Church, and the following year several others joined with the settlers at the lower falls to form the Carthage Presbyterian Society. Before the next division, the pastor him-

<sup>131</sup> Ulp, "Art and Artists in Rochester," pp. 30-31, 40; *Telegraph*, June 10, 1823; July 5, 1825; *Rochester Republican*, July 4, 1826, Feb. 9, 1830; *Advertiser*, Dec. 13, 1828; July 27, 1830.

<sup>132</sup> Charles M. Robinson, *First Church Chronicles: 1815-1915* (Rochester, 1915), pp. 31-33.

<sup>133</sup> Robinson, pp. 21-41; [Charles M. Williams], *The Reverend Comfort Williams: First Settled Pastor in Rochester* (Rochester, 1910).

self, disturbed over disputes within his flock, tendered his resignation and retired to manage a small subdivision on the southeastern outskirts of the village.<sup>134</sup>

The difficulties within the First Church sprang in part from the attempt to make Congregationalists into Presbyterians. A similar internal struggle marked the development of most churches of these closely allied sects on the New York frontier—proving that the famous Plan of Union had not produced a complete union in spirit.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless the strength of First Church was maintained and enhanced by the growing community. Its second pastor, the Reverend Joseph Penney, with a warm Scotch-Irish heart and a keen intellect trained at Dublin and Glasgow, was able to lead the congregation forward to the task of building a spacious stone church on a central plot back of the Court House.<sup>136</sup> For several years after its completion the new church remained the most pretentious structure of its kind in the town, having cost, including an elaborate heating equipment, nearly \$16,000.

At least one other church enjoyed rapid progress. Since both the Yorkers and the Southerners were Episcopal in tradition, Colonel Rochester saw to it that the church lot set aside by the proprietors went to this group. A frame structure was accordingly erected in 1820 on Fitzhugh Street near the district school, facing the public square where the Court House was soon to be constructed. The Reverend Francis H. Cuming<sup>137</sup> became the first settled pastor, and a thriving congregation following Low Church ritual enrolled, in addition to the numerous Rochester clan, such outstanding villagers as Elisha Johnson, Silas O. Smith, Enos Stone, John Mastick, Samuel J. Andrews, and William Atkinson. A tower capped with a spire and equipped with the first bell in the village added a touch of charm to the community.<sup>138</sup> St. Luke's congregation soon felt strong enough to erect a handsome Gothic edifice built of stone at a cost of \$10,000. Hamlet Scrantom proudly assumed the duties of sexton shortly after the new building was occupied in the fall of 1825.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Rev. Orlo J. Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XII, 247-249; Robinson, *First Church Chronicles*, pp. 30-42.

<sup>135</sup> James H. Dill, *Congregationalism in Western New York: Its Rise, Decline and Revival* (Rochester, 1859), pp. 5-10; James H. Hotchkiss, *A History of the Purchase and Settlement of Western New York and of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Presbyterian Church in that Section* (New York, 1848), pp. 98-120.

<sup>136</sup> Robinson, *First Church Chronicles*, pp. 42-61; Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," pp. 248-249; *Directory* (1827), pp. 125-126; *Nat. Cy. Am. Biog.*, VII, 406.

<sup>137</sup> Annah B. Yates Scrapbook, p. 175; Rev. Henry Anstice, *Annals of St. Luke's Church* (Rochester, 1883), pp. 11-19.

<sup>138</sup> Philip Stansbury, *Pedestrian Tour . . . in North America*, p. 91.

<sup>139</sup> Rev. Henry Anstice, *Centennial Annals of St. Luke's Church: 1817-1917*

While these two sects dominated the village, several others struggled for a footing. The first to secure a house of its own was the Friends' Society, whose simple frame meeting house on Fitzhugh Street, completed in 1822, served as the headquarters for several Quaker groups in the county, numbering approximately six hundred by 1828, nearly half of them within the village.<sup>140</sup> A local Catholic society, organized in 1820 as the third Roman Catholic church in the western part of the state, soon purchased a lot at the corner of Platt and Frank Streets, where in 1823 a modest chapel appeared, forerunner of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Service was provided occasionally by the Reverend Patrick Kelly of Auburn until a local priest arrived and put up temporarily at the Mansion House.<sup>141</sup>

The Methodists and the Baptists, in spite of a slow start, enjoyed a vigorous growth toward the end of the decade. After six years of worship in the Court House or one of the school buildings, a Wesleyan society, incorporated in 1820, succeeded in erecting a small brick church east of the river. Abelard Reynolds became an outstanding member, and the rapid influx of settlers moving west from the back country of New England and from the north country in New York swelled its congregation until expansion appeared necessary.<sup>142</sup> The first attempts of the Baptists to support a resident pastor proved discouraging, but after several years' boarding around in public or private halls their society acquired temporary possession of the old frame church on Carroll Street.<sup>143</sup>

The leaders of these several denominations made frequent efforts to work together when mutual interests were involved. The early Sabbath school movement, the Female Charitable Society, the local temperance and missionary societies, and the Bible Society all began as coöperative ventures, though sectarian rivalries ultimately caused duplication in most of these activities.<sup>144</sup> Even after the Sunday schools became sectarian, a Monroe County Sabbath School Union, organized in 1825, successfully brought most of the leaders and many of the scholars together on special occasions. Thus, 700 scholars gathered on Johnson's

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(Rochester, 1917), pp. 16-20; Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," pp. 250-253; Rev. R. Bethel Claxton, *Parish Memories of Forty Years* (Rochester, 1860); Hamlet Scrantom, Journal, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>140</sup> John Cox, Jr. and P. E. Clapp, "Quakers in Rochester and Monroe County," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 97-99; Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," p. 253.

<sup>141</sup> Rev. F. J. Zwierlein, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 191-194.

<sup>142</sup> Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," p. 256. Rev. D. W. C. Huntington, "Historical Sermon, Early Rochester Methodists," *Evening Express*, Dec. 1, 1877.

<sup>143</sup> Price, pp. 254-255; Rev. A. H. Strong, "Historical Sketch," *Centennial Celebration, First Baptist Church: 1818-1918* (Rochester, 1918), pp. 6-13.

<sup>144</sup> Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 292-309.

(Washington) Square and marched across the aqueduct to First Church for graduation exercises on October 4, 1826. This gathering comprised, however, only a portion of the village membership of 910, while the 76 schools in the county reported a total of 3030 scholars that year.<sup>145</sup>

The Monroe County Bible Society proved the most successful of the other mutual enterprises of the twenties. After its first organization at Ensworth's tavern in 1821, the society enlisted energetic support from most of the churches, though a decision to purchase sixty Bibles for distribution to local Catholic families may have caused some unrecorded friction. The distribution program was taken up with vigor in 1825 when Elder Josiah Bissell became agent. A survey of families lacking Bibles within the county, revealing that 1200 Bibles were needed, spurred the collection of funds for their purchase. The agent's report for the year showed a total of 2700 Bibles, Testaments, and tracts sold or given away that season. Three years later a second drive undertook to place the Word of God in every home in the county.<sup>146</sup>



The Bible furnished a common heritage, but the variations in its interpretation were almost as numerous among the villagers as among Eastern theologians—whence indeed most of them came. The battle for religious dominance in western New York had broken into the open at Canandaigua a few years before, with the Reverend Henry U. Onderdonk defending High Church principles against the attack of a neighboring Presbyterian divine.<sup>147</sup> Onderdonk had made two early attempts to establish clergymen of his persuasion at Rochester, but the first, receiving little encouragement at the falls, had moved on to Buffalo and the other to Detroit. By the time Rochester was ready for an Episcopal clergyman, Onderdonk had left for New York, and a Low Churchman received the call. Despite his more moderate ritualism, the Reverend Francis Cuming soon found himself in frequent and open disagreement with his Presbyterian neighbors.<sup>148</sup>

The struggle of the Presbyterian and Episcopal societies for leadership in the village continued throughout most of the decade. Each chose a central site near the Court House and hastened to erect a handsome stone edifice; it was perhaps unfortunate that the two buildings should practically face each other across Fitzhugh Street. Each must have its belfry, but the Christopher Wren spire on First Church overshadowed

<sup>145</sup> Monroe County Sunday School Union, *Second Report* (Rochester, 1826); *The Penny Preacher* (Rochester, 1842), pp. 75-76.

<sup>146</sup> "Monroe County Bible Society Record Book," 1821-1881, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; American Bible Society, *Ninth Report* (New York, 1825), pp. 24, 55-58; *Telegraph*, Apr. 10, 1821; Feb. 15, Mar. 29, 1825; *Observer*, Apr. 28, 1827.

<sup>147</sup> Henry U. Onderdonk, *An Appeal To the Religious Public* (Canandaigua, 1818).

<sup>148</sup> Anstice, *Annals of St. Luke's Church*, pp. 7-20.



the square Gothic tower across the street. If the Presbyterians erected the larger edifice and bedecked it with a tower clock (though the works were not installed for some time), St. Luke's provided the first organ in town.<sup>149</sup> As new residents were eagerly approached by both groups, accusations of proselytism flew back and forth.

Possibly a half-conscious reluctance to see Rochester overburdened with institutions, when one or two had always sufficed in villages back east, helped to sharpen local sectarian rivalries. Fears of inadequate support proved illusory, however. The Presbyterians were strengthened by a constant stream of Yankees from Connecticut and western Massachusetts, and while many newcomers, having shed their sectarian ties on leaving home, remained indifferent, others responded to the emotional appeals of Methodist and Baptist camp meetings.<sup>150</sup> The Episcopalians, accustomed to leadership in New York State, felt perturbed over the more rapid advance of others. The Reverend Francis Cuming of St. Luke's proved especially sensitive to criticism from the Presbyterians across the street. Thus an allusion to "churchmen" who appeal to "divine right . . . to demonstrate the truths of their beliefs" prompted the young rector to stalk out of his neighbor's church during the dedication of the new building.<sup>151</sup>

A heated altercation in pamphlet form between the rival parsons provided release to pent-up feelings. Each side doubtless enjoyed its theological vindication. What fault can one find, asked the Presbyterian divine, in a doctrine that refuses to substitute *means* for the *end* and gives attention to the primary end of rendering "men who are beings prone to sin and subject to misery, good that they may be Happy"; the Yankee, at least, felt confident of ultimate salvation "by grace through faith."<sup>152</sup> But, replied the Yorker across the street, "what can be more gratifying to the pious soul than to enter the sanctuary and behold . . . both minister and people approaching the throne of grace" through a devout performance of the *sacraments* together, for since the latter *works* are the correct means to the end of salvation, what better counsel than to give them dutiful attention?<sup>153</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Anstice, *Annals*, pp. 21-24; Robinson, *First Church Chronicles*, pp. 50-54.

<sup>150</sup> David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont: 1791-1850* (New York, 1939), pp. 3-62. Not all Yankees were Congregationalists, and in the back country of Vermont and other New England states from which so many of the Genesee settlers came, a "Puritan Counter-Reformation," led by Baptist, Methodist, and Universalist, as well as Congregationalist parsons, had been battling against a strong element of agnosticism since the early years of the century.

<sup>151</sup> Rev. Joseph Penney, *Sermon Preached at the Opening of the New Presbyterian Church in Rochester, October 28, 1824* (Rochester, 1824); Rev. Francis H. Cuming, *A Note Addressed to the Reverend Joseph Penney* (Rochester, 1824).

<sup>152</sup> Penney, *Sermon*, pp. 3, 9.

<sup>153</sup> Rev. Francis H. Cuming, *The Church Perfect and Entire* (Canandaigua, 1825), pp. 10, 19.

With the current struggle over the bank and that between the Republicans and the People's party splitting the community on almost the same lines, it must have been a relief to have all differences aired at once. Possibly it was at this time, when feelings were at their height, that "the minister across the way" was described from one pulpit as "no other than the Evil Spirit himself wrapped up in a cloak."<sup>154</sup> But while such stories lingered on in tavern gossip, the mutual interests of these two dominant churches soon brought them into closer collaboration. Indeed, the Reverend Cuming himself attracted criticism the next summer from a parishioner who wrote with mild indignation to his wife:

I was at his Church this evening and a real Presbyterian sermon he gave us—it was an hour long and offered Salvation on such terms as few people of sense would accept of—there is no use in Clergymen requiring more of us than the God of Nature has endowed us with abilities to perform.<sup>155</sup>

There were, it seemed, many in the village, both among the respectable and among those thronging the groceries and the circus booths, who did not choose salvation on the terms then offered. Incomplete church enrollments for 1827 claimed less than half the 1664 families found in the village late that year.<sup>156</sup> Critics and disciples of Tom Paine packed the Court House in 1828 to hear Benjamin Offen, the New York shoemaker-deist, debate a local Methodist parson, but several years passed before a society was formed.<sup>157</sup> The great majority were simply not concerned with the debate between *faith* and *works*. Nor were they much disturbed over the damnation of infant souls, although a small monthly paper, issued for a brief season, repeatedly attacked that tenet and everlasting punishment.<sup>158</sup> The argument brought a prompt reply,<sup>159</sup> and indeed there was no escape from the theological dilemmas of the day, as an occasional Universalist, Free Will Baptist, or Hicksite

<sup>154</sup> Carl David Arfwedson, *The United States and Canada in 1832, 1833, and 1834* (London, 1834), p. 305. Arfwedson, a Swedish traveler, recounts several unsavory tales of the Presbyterians of Rochester, where he found them the dominant sect, but they appear to have been reported to him by a former communicant.

<sup>155</sup> Dr. Anson Colman to his wife, Rochester, July 17, 1825, Colman Letters, MSS, Univ. Rochester.

<sup>156</sup> St. Luke's had 113 families and First Presbyterian, by far the largest, 278, while the Baptists numbered 100 and probably none of the others greatly exceeded the last figure. Claxton, *Parish Memories*, p. 12; Robinson, *First Church Chronicles*, p. 61; *Centennial Celebration, First Baptist Church*, p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," p. 242; *Democrat*, Feb. 6, 1835; Albert Post, *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850* (New York, 1943), pp. 148-149.

<sup>158</sup> *The Testimony of Jesus Christ and a Study of Divinity*, June, 1825-April, 1826.

<sup>159</sup> Rev. J. Sellon, *Sermons on the Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment* (Candaigua, 1828).

Quaker drifted into the settlement long enough to deliver a sermon or two.<sup>160</sup> Rumors were current of a strange new prophet, Joseph Smith, who had lately appeared a few miles east at Palmyra.<sup>161</sup> But all this disputation did not seem vitally related to the affairs of the thriving town.

Meanwhile, new theological disputes appeared, engendering sufficient explosive energy, coupled with other factors, to split the two dominant church societies and lead to the establishment of offspring congregations. The sermon of a young Andover student, the Reverend Joel Parker, delivered in the Presbyterian church on the merits of evangelical evidences of salvation stimulated the revolt led by Elder Bissell against Penney's more orthodox Calvinism. The issue had been raised by reports of the "shower of refreshing" descending upon the churches of Oneida as a result of the Finney revivals there in 1824 and 1825. Both Parker and Bissell, as spiritual kinsmen of the great revivalist who was creating dissension among theologians in the East, helped to make Rochester a crucial battleground in the struggle between Old and New School Presbyterianism. The split in the Presbyterian fold supplied the first evidence of that struggle in Rochester.<sup>162</sup>

The seceders, however, animated by sectional as well as doctrinal differences, could not agree on a location for their new church home. After meeting for a time in the old frame building, one faction chose a site on Fitzhugh Street opposite the Quaker Meeting house, while Bissell and Ely, whose land holdings lay east of the river, led another group to a site on (East) Main Street.<sup>163</sup> During the later years of the decade, while the second and third Presbyterian societies were busily engaged in constructing their respective brick and stone edifices, a similar offshoot occurred from the Episcopal society. Apparently the split, led by S. J. Andrews, William Atkinson, E. B. Strong, Elisha Johnson, and other east-siders, was based less on High Church-Low Church differences than on sectional and personal rivalries. The first choice of the new group, the brilliant Low Churchman, Charles P. McIlvaine, was bitterly attacked in a letter from the Reverend Henry Onderdonk in New York as willing to work closely with the Presby-

<sup>160</sup> *Advertiser*, Sept. 10, 1829; Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," pp. 253-254, 258, 272; Tallcut Patching, *A Religious Convincement and Plea* (Rochester, 1843). This autobiographical account of a troubled soul which wandered from one belief to another while its distraught owner sought his living in various parts of western New York after 1815 throws much light on the theological dilemmas of the day.

<sup>161</sup> *Gem*, Sept. 5, 1829, Dec. 25, 1830; *Advertiser*, Apr. 2, 1830; T. Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America* (Philadelphia, 1833), pp. 264-265.

<sup>162</sup> Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse: 1830-1844* (New York, 1933), pp. 3-10; "Joel Parker," *D. A. B.*, XIV, 231.

<sup>163</sup> Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," pp. 249-250; G. B. F. Hallock and Maude Motley, *A Living Church* (Rochester, 1925), pp. 1-13.

terians.<sup>164</sup> Onderdonk had his way with the bishop, in spite of the evident preferences of the vestry of newly organized St. Paul's, for the church erected in 1829 incorporated High Church ritual in its ambitious Gothic structure, which boasted the tallest spire in western New York.<sup>165</sup>



These bitterly resented defections had nevertheless several fortunate results. The rapid growth of the town presented opportunities for the expansion of church memberships which the existing institutions, despite the ambitious proportions of their buildings, would not have been able to meet. Moreover, the sharp rivalry between St. Luke's and First Presbyterian softened and gradually disappeared as the number of strong churches increased and other issues surged to the fore. Old denominational rivals, beginning to feel a new kinship, gave attention to their mutual interests as church people. Earlier professions of tolerance gained reality, at least within the recognized Protestant fold, as the churches turned their guns on the unregenerate members of the community, whose activities were proving a mortification to the more respectable elements.

Thus Rochester church folk, abandoning their village quarrels and striding forward to face the problems of a thriving market town, sought to remake that town in the traditional village image. The fervor engendered by the Finney revivals in central New York had repercussions in Rochester, spurring renewed attacks on the theater and the circus, the groceries and the billiard rooms, and "other mirthful enterprises" where the young lose "the pure and solid enjoyments that mingle with a life of conformity to reason and conscience, aided by the light of piety and religion."<sup>166</sup> Temperance advocates appeared, impelling the Ontario Presbytery, which included the Rochester churches, to adopt a total abstinence resolution in 1827 despite strong opposition from several ministers who "desired to treat their friends politely."<sup>167</sup>

Most determined was the campaign for a quiet observance of the Sabbath. The issue became increasingly apparent after the opening of the canal (indeed the great revival which swept across upstate New York during the late twenties had some of the characteristics of a counter-reformation to the social effects of the commercial revolution brought by Clinton's big ditch), yet local agitation for a law to close the locks on Sunday, though widely supported throughout the state, especially by those stirred to action by the great revival, gained little headway in

<sup>164</sup> [Charles P. McIlvaine], *Reverend Mr. McIlvaine in Answer to Reverend Henry U. Onderdonk* (New York, 1828); *D. A. B.*, XII, 64.

<sup>165</sup> William B. Knox to L. C. Paine, Rochester, Aug. 3, 1829, Autograph Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>166</sup> Rev. Joseph Penney, *The House of Mirth* (Rochester, 1830), pp. 14-15; Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, p. 7.

<sup>167</sup> U. P. Hedrick, *History of Agriculture in New York*, p. 285.

the legislature.<sup>168</sup> Similar agitation to stop the mails on that day met a like fate and aroused indignant opposition in Rochester. A group calling themselves the Friends of a Free and Liberal Conscience, under the leadership of the Hicksite Quaker, E. F. Marshall, and the High Churchman, S. G. Andrews, met in Christopher's long room during 1828, and voted four hundred strong against such "fanatical" measures.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, local ordinances supplied some of the desired regulations, such as prohibitions against the blowing of boat horns and the transaction of commercial affairs on the Sabbath, though the enforcement of these rules proved difficult.<sup>170</sup>

Forthright efforts to secure a correct observance of the Sabbath appeared when Elder Bissell and several Rochester and Auburn associates organized a six-day stage company. Boldly incurring an expense of \$60,000, these men equipped their line with new stages and fresh horses, and engaged reliable and temperate drivers who undertook to keep a schedule of stops between Albany and Buffalo by way of Rochester at such speed as to make up for the day of rest. The line proved a lively competitor to the old stage company for several years, earnestly endeavoring to persuade all good Christians to boycott its Sabbath-breaking rival.<sup>171</sup>

Meanwhile the Female Charitable Society afforded increased activity to young matrons who were finding new leisure from household duties. Funds collected at annual charity sermons in the various churches assisted the one-hundred-odd "benevolent ladies in . . . softening the pangs of grief, soothing the despair of affliction, assuaging the pains of sickness, wiping the widow's eyes, and warming and educating her orphans." Pitifully small sums they were, ranging between fifty and seventy dollars a year, including members' dues, but through the practice of loaning "articles of clothing, bedding, etc. during periods of sickness," the volunteer visitors, each charged with a specified district of the town, were able to extend their friendly aid throughout the community.<sup>172</sup>

The "Signs of the Times," as reviewed by Joel Parker in a Thanksgiving sermon in 1828, were encouraging indeed. He saw "evidence that the secular advantages" with which the community had been favored "are to be sanctified by a moral influence." He rejoiced that

<sup>168</sup> *Laws of the State of New York in Relation to the Erie and Champlain Canals* (Albany, 1825), II, 577-578; *Assembly Journal* (1825), pp. 633, 1149; *Observer*, Mar. 17, 1827; July 22, 1828.

<sup>169</sup> *Observer*, Feb. 8, 1828; *Album*, Feb. 12, 1828.

<sup>170</sup> *Rochester in 1827*, p. 107.

<sup>171</sup> O' Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 313; *Album*, Mar. 18, 1828; Josiah Bissell to Gerrit Smith, Rochester, Apr. 28, 1830, Gerritt Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

<sup>172</sup> Amy H. Coughton, "Rochester Female Charitable Society," pp. 68-71.

"the increase of wealth is enabling a host of good men to devote time & money, and influence to the advancement of sound morals & pure religion."<sup>173</sup> Look, he advised his hearers, at the Bible Society, the tract societies, the missionary cause, the Sabbath schools, the temperance societies, and the Antimasonic organizations. Alas, he felt it necessary to devote a major part of his sermon to that last cause, thus helping to stoke the fires of a new controversy which was rapidly disrupting the work in Rochester of the other agencies he mentioned. Doubtless he would not have hesitated had he realized the effects of his discourse, for there was an intensity of conviction behind the social codes of the day which brooked no compromise. Only from the resistances of an increasingly complex community could the citizens learn an urbane tolerance, and in some fields it was to be a long hard lesson.

<sup>173</sup> Joel Parker, *The Signs of the Times* (Rochester, 1828), pp. 6ff.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UPHEAVAL

1818-1829

THE MOMENTUM of its growth contributed an inevitable turbulence and disharmony to the society and politics of early Rochester. Dissimilar population elements and the boisterous life of the canal distorted the simple village pattern of the early twenties, giving rise to a keen struggle for leadership. Rival weekly and daily papers provided free vent to the contending factions and helped to focus attention on the possibility of achieving dominance through political channels. The chance emergence of a dramatic issue in the Antimasonic controversy disrupted earlier associations and produced a new alignment of forces. In the resulting turmoil, Rochester (which had started the decade with a battle for its independence) emerged as the focal point in a new political movement. Unfortunate events disclosed bitter factional jealousies, and only with great reluctance was the necessity for accommodating individual interests to the community's welfare recognized. Indeed, the lesson was imperfectly mastered during this decade of the town's most rapid growth.

#### VILLAGE FOLKWAYS IN TRANSITION

The quaint New England village life of early Rochester and the Colonel's effort to introduce Southern patriarchal features were alike forced to retreat before the steady influx of new elements during the mid-twenties. At times the animated life of the taverns, thronging with out-of-town merchants and travelers, and again the commotion provided by the new breed of canallers eager for diversion, threatened to overshadow the activities of the settled villagers. But the rapid increase of the number of energetic townsmen, whose dashing manners had an undeniable respectability, strengthened the permanent fibers and broadened the pattern of local society. In several respects the interests and activities of the various elements coincided, and the community soon found itself provided with many of the social facilities of a prosperous town.

During the early twenties Rochester doubtless appeared a welcome haven to lonely migrants from New England. The town's social circle

had not yet crystallized, and newcomers enjoyed easy access to its fellowship. At least one stranger described the social setting with appreciation:

I arrived here with unfavorable prejudices: knowing as I did the sudden growth of the place, I expected as a natural consequence, that individuals were congregated here from every part of the U. S. with no other similarity in their views than a determination to make *money*. . . . But I have been agreeably disappointed—the people are primarily from New England and they appear to have brought with them the hospitality, the courtesy, and the enterprise of that “much loved land.” No little foolish jealousies interrupt social intercourse or the harmony of the festive circle—nor has modern *Refinement* substituted cold heartless formality for confidence and good will.

The evening after I arrived there was a *Cotillion party*. I was invited . . . and never have I beheld a more brilliant assemblage of ladies. Grace, dignity and affability shone resplendent from the faces of the “fair spirits.” Soon . . . the dance exhibited the female form moving light as zephyrs with grace and dignity in every motion. . . . The room was splendidly illuminated and fancifully decorated with evergreens. . . . I leave the village tomorrow, not without regret.<sup>1</sup>

A cordial welcome awaited newcomers in most new Western villages, yet Rochester was among the first to produce such a fullness of life in its very first years. Canandaigua and other older towns excelled in charm, but a spirit of wanderlust did not assure access to their established circles. In Rochester all turned out to join the sleighing on the first favorable evenings, for which everybody had been waiting impatiently for many dreary weeks. The number of weddings attended by one local diarist revealed abundant jollification on that account, while the arrival of a relation or old neighbor from the East frequently provided occasion for festivities.<sup>2</sup>

With promising young merchants, mechanics, clerks, law and theology students stopping across the way, Rochester seemed almost a maiden's paradise.<sup>3</sup> A young girl's autograph book, in which she collected verses expressing the good wishes of numerous beaux and fond elders, quickly became a recipe book in which muffins, ginger cookies, elderberry wine, toothache remedies, and crochet patterns crowded out the poetry—apparently without destroying the lively spirits.<sup>4</sup> Village housewives saw little need to break their backs when younger sisters or cousins were only too eager to come on from the New England hills to visit the

<sup>1</sup> *Rochester Gazette*, Jan. 2, 1820.

<sup>2</sup> Esther Maria Ward Chapin, *Diary*, 1819–1823, typed copy, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. *Census* (1830), p. 40. Although Rochester numbered 2351 girls under 20 years to 2119 boys, the ratio was reversed above that age with 1266 men 20 to 30 years as compared with 1009 young women, and 743 to 533 respectively in the 30 to 40 age group.

<sup>4</sup> Miss Nabby Baldwin's Book, 1826–1832, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.



bustling town and demonstrate their domestic proficiency. If necessary, a house girl could be engaged at one dollar a week, though there was sure to be difficulty in keeping her beyond a few months. In the course of a year one young matron turned out fifteen shirts, three corsets, seven nightcaps, eight nightgowns, three petticoats, ten slips, six gowns, two Van Dykes, one quilted bed cover, and one great coat, not to mention numerous kerchiefs and other items. Time could still be found for an occasional concert or lecture in addition to the regular church services and charity society meetings; visits to a nearby relative or at the home of a neighbor across the river would fill a day or two each week; or a quilting bee would help pass a lonesome evening while a young husband attended court or engaged in other affairs.<sup>5</sup> If the mud was deep in the streets the full-skirted matron might have to go to the quilting bee in a barrow, but get there she would.<sup>6</sup> "From dancing too much," Mrs. Vought suffers "of the rheumatism occasionally," reported the wife of Joseph Spencer, the Rochester representative at Albany in 1823. "I am afraid I [too] shall be getting dissipated," Elisabeth Spencer added, as she decided not to attend a third concert by the Rollo family, "great and loud singers . . . better than Miss Davis the singing Miss from Dublin."<sup>7</sup>

Practically every home had a garden, and the ripening of early vegetables was eagerly awaited in the springtime. Scattered fruit trees were in bud, beginning to yield as the decade advanced. Everard Peck advertised a supply of garden seed at his book store, while itinerant nurserymen peddled young sprouts, including rose bushes and grape vines.<sup>8</sup> Colonel Rochester brought a trained gardener from the East to set out a tree nursery behind his new home on Spring Street.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the village enjoyed the plentiful supply of fresh fruit brought in with the loads of hay or grain from the older farms up the valley.<sup>10</sup>

Each season had its choice delicacies and favorite activities, its special domestic pleasures of interest to all. Possibly the calving of the faithful milk cow gave the greatest thrill to the numerous inquisitive youngsters. Even more bustle and excitement accompanied the annual butchering, and young Dr. Colman, off for a special course in an Eastern medical

<sup>5</sup> Esther M. W. Chapin, *Diary*.

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous reminiscences, in Peck Scrapbook, III, 11, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth Selden Spencer to Joseph Spencer, Rochester, Jan. 30, 1823, Elisabeth Selden Spencer Eaton Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Elizabeth Selden Rogers, New York City.

<sup>8</sup> *Rochester Telegraph*, Oct. 21, 1823; Feb. 10, 1824; Blake McKelvey, "The Flower City: Center of Nurseries and Fruit Orchards," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 122-125.

<sup>9</sup> Ebenezer Frost to Col. Rochester, Apr. 18, 1826; John J. G. Frost to Col. Rochester, Troy, July 20, 1826, Rochester Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>10</sup> U. R. Hedrick, *The History of Agriculture in New York State* (Albany, 1938), p. 384.

school, wrote back with concern in November, 1831, lest his wife, Colonel Rochester's daughter, Catherine, delay too long the task of killing the family hogs, for good care should be taken to smoke the hams before the weather became too cold.<sup>11</sup> There were enough of these simple rustic chores to keep the settled members of the community fairly occupied until late fall when the families could gather for their annual Thanksgiving feasts, grateful for past blessings but hopeful that the months ahead would not bring too many days on which it would be difficult to keep warm before a blazing log fire.<sup>12</sup>

The tedious winter months frequently provided opportunity for a business trip to New York, possibly leaving time for a call on the old folks in the New England hills. Young relatives or old neighbors from Yankeeland supplied congenial companions on the return journey, many of whom were destined to find Rochester an agreeable residence. The womenfolk who kept the home fires burning through the cold season occasionally gained a respite during the late summer for a visit to a Western cousin. Husbands were sure to be more agreeable to such journeys when thoughts of a renewed migration westward disturbed their dreams. Esther Maria Ward Chapin enjoyed such a trip, taking thirteen days for the leisurely drive with her young cousin and Mother Ward to Marietta on the Ohio by way of Buffalo and Erie. After a brief visit in which the relative merits of Marietta and Rochester were compared, to the latter's advantage in a social though not a business sense, the party returned without more serious mishap than being caught in a shower.<sup>13</sup>

As might be expected, family jealousies tended to develop. It was perhaps inevitable that they should follow political and economic lines, but in Rochester they quickly acquired a sectional character as well. Colonel Rochester's arrival in the community had been welcomed by his Yankee townsfellows,\*but when his numerous offspring filtered in from neighboring settlements, the semblance of a clan soon became the object of much ill feeling.<sup>14</sup> The aged Colonel delighted to gather his growing family about him for an annual picnic at his homestead overlooking the river. With his twelve children, three sons- and two daughters-in-law, and upwards of a dozen grandchildren, these parties formed the outstanding social affairs in the village.<sup>15</sup> Doubtless a few of the more distant in-laws were included, such as the Reverend Francis Cuming of St. Luke's, whose sister was now the wife of Thomas Hart

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Anson Colman to his wife, Philadelphia, Nov. 28, 1831, Colman Letters, Univ. Rochester; Scrantom Journal, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>12</sup> Esther M. W. Chapin, Diary.

<sup>13</sup> E. M. W. Chapin, Diary, June 18-July 31, 1821.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Anson Colman to his wife, Boston, Jan. 17, 1825, Colman Letters.

<sup>15</sup> "Descendants of Colonel Nathaniel Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 341-

Rochester. But many received no invitation, and sufficient resentment against the proprietor developed to cause a slight disturbance in 1824. The next year, when the bitterness over the struggle for control of the bank as well as in the political conflict had reached its height, the disgruntled element sought to place the proprietor's picnic in the shade. Some 400 invitations were sent out for a Grand Public Ball on that day, but as only fourteen or fifteen couples appeared the demonstration was discredited.<sup>16</sup> With the Colonel's removal the next year to his new and less conspicuous homestead, these family gatherings doubtless appeared less objectionable to the great majority of the townsfolk, many of whom had family groups of their own sufficient to absorb their attentions.<sup>17</sup>

Even the favored homes had their misfortunes as the fever and ague and many other ailments made indiscriminating visitations to every household, frequently carrying off a vigorous member.<sup>18</sup> Seventeen doctors already served the lower Genesee settlements in 1821, when the Monroe County Medical Society was formed with authority under state law to appoint officers charged with supervising the local practice of medicine. By 1827 the number of licensed doctors in the village had increased to twenty-five, a high ratio of about one doctor to 320 inhabitants.<sup>19</sup> Numerous herbs and roots were in favor, as well as various patent cures, but "drastic emetics" proved the chief reliance of fever sufferers seeking to throw off their periodic fits. Fever and consumption, as loosely defined, accounted for most deaths among adult persons, though bowel complaints and accidents were becoming more frequent.<sup>20</sup>

While most doctors boasted some training, usually under an older physician back East, the many prevalent diseases frequently proved baffling. Anson Colman, seeking further light, traveled east late in 1824 to attend a course of lectures and demonstrations at the Boston Medical School and Hospital. Leaving his patients in care of an associate, Dr. Colman nevertheless took pains to write his young wife that winter, advising her to be sure to have the children and her "Pa" and "Ma" (Colonel and Mrs. Rochester) bled if attacked during his absence, for, he reminded her, "bleeding is the grand remedy in almost

<sup>16</sup> Dr. Anson Colman to his wife, Rochester, July 9, 1825, Colman Letters.

<sup>17</sup> See below, pp. 333, 363.

<sup>18</sup> Esther M. W. Chapin, Diary.

<sup>19</sup> Betsy C. Corner, "A Century of Medicine in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 322-334.

<sup>20</sup> *Rochester Telegraph*, Oct. 9, 1828. Of 29 deaths recorded in September, 6 were attributed to bilious fever, 6 to bowel complaints, 4 to brain and other fevers, 2 to measles, and 1 each to old age, consumption, inflammation of the lungs, inflammatory fever, dysentery, and drowning. *Rochester Republican*, Jan. 26, 1830. Of 170 deaths during the previous year, 86 were among young children; 31 of the older persons were reported killed by consumption and 25 by fever.

all of our winter complaints.”<sup>21</sup> As that remedy, however, did not give full satisfaction, a medical association was formed to assure its members a “mutual improvement in medical knowledge.”<sup>22</sup> The appearance of several small medical treatises written or at least published in Rochester during these years further indicated concern over health problems.<sup>23</sup>

The practice of sending for the minister by the same lad who brought the doctor was justified by experience. Fatalities were high among children, and few of those who survived died of old age. The burial records of St. Luke's Church during this period reveal twice as many deaths in the prime of life, 20 to 40 years, as among all over 40.<sup>24</sup> Vital statistics for the month of September, 1828, show that 15 of the 29 deaths occurred among children under 10, and 12 between 20 and 40 years. Again, 86 of the 170 burials for 1829 were children under 10, and only 12 had reached 60 years.<sup>25</sup> But this situation characterized most American communities of the day, and many Rochesterians met it, like devout Christians elsewhere, with the determination not to permit one of these afflictions to slip by without gaining the fortitude and humility of spirit it was meant to teach.<sup>26</sup> Rochester mourners had a great advantage over more isolated sufferers in the numerous calls from friendly neighbors, for such visiting early became a major activity of charitable-minded young matrons. Thus, even bereavements helped to develop the community ties of the village.



The charming community life of early Rochester was not unlike that of many another village, except for the added excitement and cordiality born from the half-conscious realization that all were engaged together

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Anson Colman to his wife, Boston, Dec. 5, 1824, Colman Letters.

<sup>22</sup> Corner, “Medicine in Rochester,” pp. 333-334; *Rochester in 1827* (Rochester, 1828), p. 146.

<sup>23</sup> David Rogers, *The American Physician; Being a New System of Practice Founded on Botany* (Rochester, 1824); John G. Vought, *A Treatise on Bowel Complaints* (Rochester, 1823); Elijah Sedgwick, *The Plain Physician* (Rochester, 1827); Daniel J. Cobb, *The Family Adviser* (Rochester, 1828).

<sup>24</sup> Annah B. Yates, “Early Records of St. Luke's Church,” *R. H. S., Pub.*, V, 158-159.

<sup>25</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 9, 1828; *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 26, 1830. Vital statistics for September, 1940, with a population thirty times as large, reveal only a tenfold increase in deaths. Of the 299 deaths, only 24 were children under ten (8 per cent as compared with 51 per cent in 1828), only 38 fell between the ages of fifteen and fifty, while 111 were over seventy and another 126 over fifty at the time of death (79 per cent over fifty as compared with 7 per cent over forty in 1828). See Rochester Health Bureau *Bulletin*, September, 1940. Of course a correction for age distribution would modify this striking contrast, and yet, aside from the decreased birth rate, a major cause for the wide disparity in the age distributions of the two periods is the contrast in death rates noted above.

<sup>26</sup> Esther M. W. Chapin, *Diary*.

in what might be described as a "town raising." But clouds on the horizon already threatened to darken the sunny days. By the close of the decade the disharmonies of a boom town had seriously disturbed the earlier peaceful scene. A description of the village, written in 1824 by Harvey Fish for preservation in the corner stone of the First Presbyterian Church, declared in part:

In 1821 it pleased the Lord to favor this little church with a refreshing from His presence. At that time some of the first men and lawyers became hopefully the children of God. . . . Since then the number of those who are wicked and scoffers has increased faster than that of those who fear God. Hence there are many among us who are swearers, drunkards, extortioners, Sabbath breakers, deceivers, liars and who work all manner of iniquity. Collectively, the inhabitants may be called a liberal benevolent people.<sup>27</sup>

Hundreds of transients and the great number of more or less unsettled residents who crowded the "tenements" and boarding houses were forced to seek diversion in public places. This was the class best known to the traveler, whether native or foreign. Every bustling New York village has its supply of "inhabitants who frequent the taverns every evening, part dandy, part horse-jockey, and part gentleman," one traveler observed disdainfully, adding that "they do not interrogate a stranger as the Yankees do, but rather put on the airs of a city barber towards a country gentleman."<sup>28</sup> The daily throng of drivers who brought loads of grain, bark, firewood, hay, or other produce in from the surrounding farms and the canallers awaiting the departure of their boats added still other elements to the scene. Probably few places in the mid-twenties attracted a more turbulent concourse than the Genesee market town at the height of its boom.<sup>29</sup>

Facilities for the accommodation and entertainment of these groups were quickly provided, as the multiplication of groceries indicated. The first years of canal activity in Rochester saw an increase of commercial amusements as well as the opening of a public bathhouse equipped to supply a hundred baths a day. Dancing masters offered instruction in social graces, and the Monroe Garden, "nicely-fitted up with booths and gravel walks and ornamented with shrubs and flowers," supplied an open-air resort.<sup>30</sup> The taverns provided dining and drinking rooms, billiard tables and ninepin alleys at all seasons, while their ballrooms, or long halls, served for dances and acrobatic performances.<sup>31</sup>

The appearance and activity of the central part of the village radically

<sup>27</sup> *Democrat & Chronicle*, April 27, 1871.

<sup>28</sup> Letter signed "A. B.," reprinted from the *Utica Sentinel* in the *Telegraph*, July 16, 1822.

<sup>29</sup> "Major Noah, A Peep at the West," *Telegraph*, June 28, 1825.

<sup>30</sup> Jesse Hatch, "Memories of Village Days," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 235-247; *Telegraph*, May 10, 1825.

<sup>31</sup> Hatch, "Memories of Village Days"; *Telegraph*, July 8, 1823.

altered during the decade. For several years the horse trough in front of the Ensworth tavern at the Four Corners and the water fountain and circular trough in the mill yard at the southwest end of the bridge had appeared fit symbols of the village life, attracting teamsters to the heart of town. But by the close of the period the heavy produce wagons were left standing farther out or taken directly to the mills and warehouses. By this time the wooden tavern at the Four Corners had been removed to a rear lot, and an elegant brick hotel was in process of erection on the site; though the fountain in the mill yard remained<sup>32</sup> the horse trough disappeared from its central corner. Reynolds Arcade, the Globe Building, and many lesser structures presented a fairly continuous line of store fronts, at least on the north side of Buffalo and Main streets and around the corner on Carroll and Mill streets, soon to be renamed State and Exchange.

A fashionable attire was becoming respectable in more than one sense. The dandy of the early twenties became the successful business man of a few years later, almost without altering his garb. On special occasions he might don a high stock, a blue broadcloth coat cut swallow-tail, a buff-colored vest decked with brass buttons, a pair of uncreased mouse-colored trousers which nearly covered the white stockings, and shoes sporting a pair of shiny buckles. Tailors hailing from New York or Philadelphia were ready to accommodate gentlemen with the latest fashions,<sup>33</sup> while the number of millinery shops catering to "females" drew comment from Basil Hall.<sup>34</sup> Even matrons among the settled residents found pleasure in a promenade along the new pavements which added dignity as well as comfort to the growing town.<sup>35</sup> "A spirit of obtaining the fashions," as one traveler observed, "seems to prevail among all classes, from the steeple top to the shoe string."<sup>36</sup>

The eagerness with which the church societies followed the latest architectural design in their new Gothic edifices, even, in the case of St. Paul's, importing stained glass rosettes for the windows,<sup>37</sup> made it difficult to condemn fashion as such. "Rochester was made up of young, dashing, generous people," Thurlow Weed later recalled.<sup>38</sup> Lotteries enjoyed an almost unquestioned respectability as convenient devices for raising educational and charitable funds,<sup>39</sup> and it was proving difficult

<sup>32</sup> See the map of Rochester, 1833.

<sup>33</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 3, 1820; G. B. F. Hallock and Maude Motley, *A Living Church, the First Hundred Years of the Brick Church in Rochester* (Rochester, 1925), p. 204.

<sup>34</sup> Basil Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828*, p. 156.

<sup>35</sup> "Reminiscences of the 1820's," Peck Scrapbook, III, 11, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>36</sup> *Telegraph*, July 16, 1822.

<sup>37</sup> *Roch. Republican*, June 1, 1830.

<sup>38</sup> Thurlow Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>39</sup> Generous space was devoted to lottery advertisements in the early papers, the most frequent being the New York State Literature Lottery.

to regulate or expel other agencies which played an active part in the vigorous social life.

Almost without realizing it, Rochester had blossomed forth as a leading "bright spot" of western New York.<sup>40</sup> The occasional concerts welcomed to the meeting house at the beginning of the decade<sup>41</sup> continued, while traveling animal shows, panoramas, and at least one theatrical troupe performed in the various taverns before 1825, the year in which the Rochester Circus appeared on Mill (Exchange) Street. The first dramatic season was perhaps that of March, 1824, when a group of actors from the Albany and New York theaters visited Rochester and performed "How to Die for Love" and other plays in Christopher's Long Room.<sup>42</sup> The construction of the circus building a year later afforded more adequate facilities for a second dramatic season, though the disorderly character of the crowd in the pit roused frequent complaints.<sup>43</sup> The museum of wax figures exhibited in the village in 1821 made occasional return visits, attracting much attention to its Temple of Industry, in which twenty-six moving figures demonstrated as many different employments.<sup>44</sup> A permanent museum opened in 1825, when J. R. Bishop, whose museum of wax figures, panoramas, and other novelties had been located for a time in both Canandaigua and Buffalo, removed finally to Rochester, where the educational value of his displays won continued support.<sup>45</sup>

The year 1826 brought a burst of dramatic activity on the Genesee. Two theatrical companies bid for dominance, each opening in new quarters during the year and presenting numerous performances despite the heavy license fees exacted by the trustees. H. A. Williams, who enlisted the support of local citizens in erecting a new building on Carroll Street, enjoyed much popular favor.<sup>46</sup> The frequent appearance of an able star, such as Robert G. Maywood from the Chatham Garden Theater in New York, attracted a more respectable audience and enabled the Williams theater to continue after the failure of its rival.

Public sentiment soon divided over the merits of these activities. Most of the Yankee Presbyterians strongly disapproved of the theater, but Hamlet Scrantom, pioneer resident and now sexton of St. Luke's,

<sup>40</sup> George M. Elwood, "Some Earlier Public Amusements of Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, I, 17-27; Nellie E. Bitz, "A Half Century of Theater in Early Rochester," M. A. thesis, Syracuse University, 1941, typed copy, Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>41</sup> R. H. Lansing, "Music in Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, II, 135-138.

<sup>42</sup> *Telegraph*, Mar. 16, June 15, 1824.

<sup>43</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Sept. 27, Oct. 11, Nov. 15, 1825; May 30, 1826.

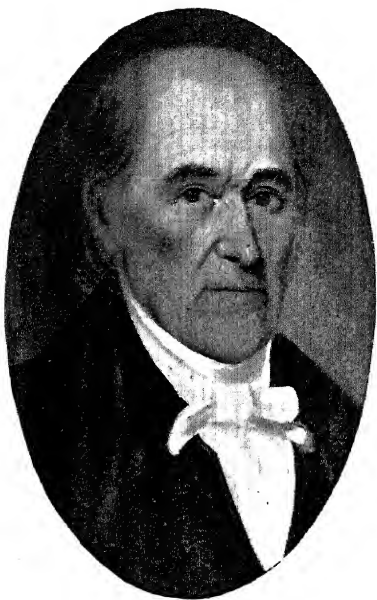
<sup>44</sup> *Telegraph*, Jan. 2, 1821; July 27, Nov. 9, 1824.

<sup>45</sup> *Ontario Repository*, Dec. 12, 1820; *Telegraph*, Jan. 2, 1821, July 27, 1824; *Advertiser*, Oct. 16, 1827.

<sup>46</sup> Elwood, "Public Amusements of Rochester"; Bitz, "Theater in Early Rochester," pp. 15-30.



VI. 1. ENOS STONE



VI. 2. HAMLET SCRANTOM

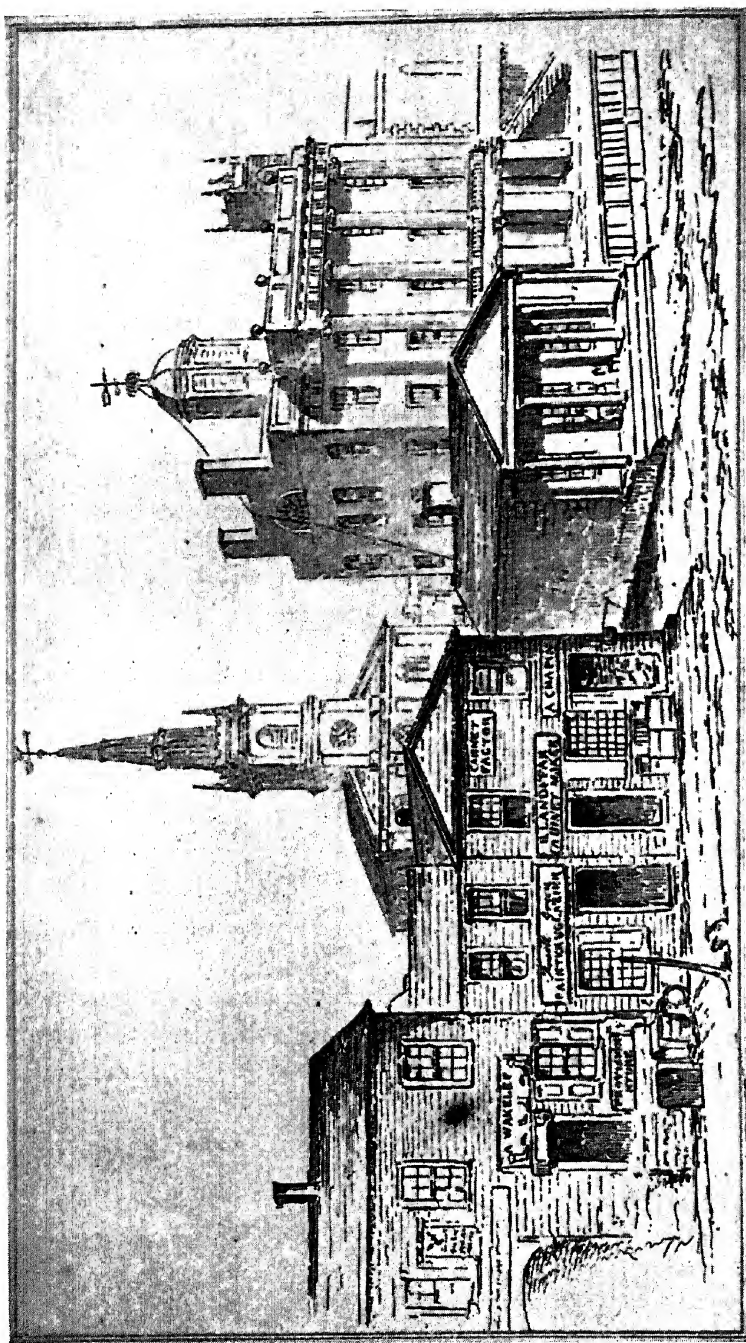


VI. 3. ABELARD REYNOLDS



VI. 4. DR. LEVI WARD





VII. THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE AT ROCHESTER, 1827

eagerly noted in his diary the visits of a circus and frequently attended the offerings at the new theater.<sup>47</sup> The rising attorney, Frederick Whittlesey, a graduate of Yale and Litchfield, delivered an address to Thespis in verse at the theater's opening at which "The Honeymoon" and "The Poor Soldier" were presented. Almost unknown among the performers was "Little Billy" Forrest, destined, years later, to acquire distinction as a comedian. A fairly active dramatic season enlivened the village that year, especially after a practicable licensing arrangement was reached with the trustees. At least one actor of the first rank, Edmund Kean, stopped over during a visit to Niagara Falls long enough to take part in the "Iron Chest," then playing at the Rochester theater.<sup>48</sup> "Fortune's Frolick," "William Tell," "Robinson Crusoe," "Kenilworth," "Macbeth," "Sweethearts and Wives," were among the varied offerings.

But the company failed to overcome the community's growing hostility. Several charitable matrons, learning how to be stiff-necked as well, declined an offer of a benefit performance for the Female Charitable Society. Denied a respectable patronage, the theater struggled along with such audiences as it could attract. In an effort to gratify local interest, Charles S. Talbot, Rochester's leading actor in 1827, wrote and produced "Captain Morgan, or the Conspiracy Unveiled," attracting crowds for several nights by his lively account of the current Morgan scandal, but that issue proved too serious for light treatment. Successive troupes, shortening their Rochester visits, hastened westward in search of a more favorable response.<sup>49</sup> One editor, complaining that inhabitants "within gun-shot of the theatre have been compelled to hear till midnight or after, reiterated peals of hooting, howling, shouting, shrieking, and almost every other unseemly noise," demanded that the village refuse to grant further licenses.<sup>50</sup> Though no such ordinance appeared in the trustees' minutes, the first attempt to establish a permanent local theater was defeated.<sup>51</sup>

The greater favor enjoyed by animal shows resulted, in 1827, in a free license for the local exhibit of the "animal automatons" as well as "the Grecian Dog Apollo," noted for his mathematical skill. Tippoo Sultan, "the great hunting elephant from India," was hailed as the leading member of a Grand Carnival that visited Rochester in 1823, and five years later the learned elephant, Columbus, said to weigh 8120 pounds, lumbered in on his own power for a two-day visit.

<sup>47</sup> Hamlet Scrantom, *Journal*, Sept. 21, 1825; May 15, June 26, July 1, 1826.

<sup>48</sup> *Monroe Republican*, July 18, 1826; Harold N. Hillebrand, *Edmund Kean* (New York, 1933), p. 271.

<sup>49</sup> Charles S. Talbot, *Captain Morgan, or the Conspiracy Unveiled* (Rochester, 1827); Bitz, "Theater in Early Rochester," pp. 29-57.

<sup>50</sup> *Album*, Jan. 8, 1828.

<sup>51</sup> Elwood, "Public Amusements of Rochester," pp. 17-27.

Equestrian performers provided the more usual features of these visiting animal shows. Tickets costing from 25 to 50 cents were eagerly purchased by the numerous wagoners in from the lonely life on the scattered farms.<sup>52</sup>



But if Rochester was a place to write home about, the noncommercialized opportunities for amusement and excitement were chiefly responsible. The falls and the river gorge provided choice views and interesting strolls on all occasions,<sup>53</sup> and no closed season checked fishing, although bathing within the bounds was now tabu even after dark.<sup>54</sup> A lively scene usually appeared around the mill yards and canal basins, particularly at Ely's basin at the morning or evening hour of the packet boat's arrival or departure. Numerous unusual building operations attracted attention: a steeple going up here, a four-story tavern over there, a great stone mill on the very brink of the gorge, a market actually straddling the rushing torrent of the river. Even the Sabbath became more animated as the clanging of the increased number of church bells called out streams of communicants, resplendent in a Sunday best that was ever adding new frills and ruffles.<sup>55</sup>

On special occasions the busy community paused to celebrate a local or national achievement or to honor a visiting celebrity. Farmers from miles around would not miss the thrill of the Rochester crowds on such days. The annual Fourth of July celebration, with the Rochester band proudly leading the parade and local parsons or attorneys supplying the necessary pabulum, usually concluded with a banquet at a leading tavern.<sup>56</sup> Regulations against the use of firearms within the bounds were relaxed to permit Captain Benjamin Brown's Rifle Brigade or the local detachment of Irish Volunteers to fire the traditional salutes.<sup>57</sup> The local band and the militia companies made frequent contributions to the life of the town in their annual military balls, and on one occasion the bands of neighboring towns visited Rochester to take part in a musical display.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Telegraph*, July 8, 1823; Nov. 16, 1824; *Advertiser*, July 30, 1828; "Mr. Champlin's Benefit," MS program of a performance in Rochester on Oct. 25, 1825. See also R. W. G. Vail, "Random Notes on the History of the Early American Circus," Amer. Antiquarian Soc., *Proceedings*, vol. XXXIII, new series, part I (April, 1933), pp. 116-185.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph H. Nichols, Diary, MS, copied in Samson Note Book, XI, 96, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>54</sup> Rochester *Directory* (1827), p. 100.

<sup>55</sup> William B. Knox to Hon. L. C. Paine, Rochester, July 11, Aug. 3, 1829, MS, Autograph Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.; "Reminiscences of J. L. H. Mosier," *Union and Advertiser*, Feb. 12, 1884.

<sup>56</sup> *Monroe Republican*, June 21, 1821; *Gazette*, July 11, 1820.

<sup>57</sup> W. C. Case, "Rochester's Citizen Soldiers," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 233-237.

<sup>58</sup> *Scrantom Journal*, Feb. 22, Mar. 28, 1826; Feb. 22, 1827.

More formal pageantry and still greater excitement marked the local reception of General Lafayette on his American tour. It was on June 7, 1825, that the "Nation's Guest" arrived by canal boat, escorted by a flotilla of twelve flag-bedecked packets crowded with Rochesterians who had gone out to meet the venerable general. The village thronged with double its normal population as an estimated ten thousand lined the bridges over the canal and other points of vantage along the route, eager to take part in the joyful acclamation.<sup>59</sup> To Lafayette and his companions it must have been just a continuation of an already over-prolonged tour,<sup>60</sup> but to the villagers it afforded an occasion for thoughts of the republic and its foreign friends, of its principles, and especially of its remarkable history. In similar spirit, the community undertook a general illumination, hanging lanterns at every door, on a December evening two years later in honor of the defeat of the Turks.<sup>61</sup>

Of course the celebration most directly related to local affairs was that marking the official opening of the canal. Plans for the occasion had long been discussed throughout the state, and as each community along the canal desired a share in the festivities, a triumphal journey by Governor Clinton, its faithful champion, was agreed upon. News of the official completion of the canal, sounded eastward from point to point by a succession of widely spaced cannon, reverberated through Rochester at 10:20 on the morning of October 26, 1825.<sup>62</sup> The town's reception of the official party the next afternoon proved spirited despite a steady rain. The two local companies, now boasting an artillery, appeared in dress uniform, supported by rifle companies from Rush and Penfield. Services in the spacious Presbyterian church which stood at the very edge of the canal preceded a bounteous dinner at the Mansion House. A special Rochester boat, named the "Young Lion of the West," laden with barrels of Rochester flour and other products, joined the procession as it continued the slow journey to New York. A ball in Colonel Leonard's assembly room and a "brilliant illumination" of the village with lanterns at every door and candles at many windows fittingly concluded the local celebration that evening.<sup>63</sup>

A celebration of special interest was that of local members and friends of the colored race who paraded on July 5, 1827, rejoicing over the final grant of freedom to all Negroes in New York State. A colored pastor

<sup>59</sup> *Telegraph*, June 14, 1825.

<sup>60</sup> A. Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825* (New York, 1829), II, 215-216.

<sup>61</sup> *Scrantom Journal*, Dec. 22, 1827. The great naval battle of Navarino had occurred two months before.

<sup>62</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Nov. 1, 1825.

<sup>63</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Nov. 1, 15, 1825; Cadwallader D. Colden, *Memoir . . . of the Celebration of the New York Canals* (New York, 1825), pp. 166-168, 191-192, 198, 299-300; *Scrantom Journal*.

with a Methodist license took part in the festivities, and soon the first African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized and a building dedicated the next year, though not in time for the second independence day.<sup>64</sup>

But the event destined to serve as a climax to the sometimes reckless pageantry of the boom town was Sam Patch's leap over the main falls. Patch had earned a reputation for daring feats in the East, both in New England and New Jersey, and his spreading fame as a cataract jumper prompted an invitation to demonstrate his skill at Niagara in the fall of 1829.<sup>65</sup> After two successful jumps there, one from a perch a hundred feet above the water, Sam could not hesitate over the Genesee. Indeed, he successfully performed the jump from a rocky ledge at the brink of the main falls early in November, and the plaudits of a small crowd encouraged him to announce a last jump for that season a week later over the same falls. Sam's laconic remark that "some things can be done as well as others" was picked up and passed along as a fit motto by his admirers as preparations for a gala occasion advanced. A platform, erected on Brown's Island overlooking the falls, increased the height above water to 120 feet, and on Friday, November 13, a great throng gathered from the town and the country round, lining the natural amphitheater of the gorge to see the widely advertised spectacle. Whether or not Sam had relaxed his self-control at a tavern beforehand, the bold jumper apparently lost his customary poise in the descent. With arms whirling he struck the water with a great splash and failed to reappear in its swirling eddies.

Rochester gained wide fame from Sam's last jump, and Patch became the subject of much doggerel verse, winning a place in the folklore of the young republic, but it was a chastened and thoughtful populace that quietly dispersed from the falls that day.<sup>66</sup>

#### RAMPANT POLITICAL JOURNALISM

The politico-economic rivalries of the early twenties were but mild forerunners of the journalistic outbursts soon to occur. Rochester's sudden rise had made it the publication center of western New York, attracting a dozen aspiring editors and publishers who displayed little restraint in their struggle for leadership. The rapidly shifting political scene placed a premium on aggressive ingenuity, while the growing intensity of moral compunctions provided the dynamics for righteous

<sup>64</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 134; *Advertiser*, July 7, 1828; *Observer*, Sept. 12, Oct. 3, 1828; *Observer*, July 7, 1828.

<sup>65</sup> *Gem*, Sept. 19, Oct. 3, 31, 1829.

<sup>66</sup> *Gem*, Nov. 14, 1829; Samson Notebook III, 1st item; XI, 215-216; XVI, 44. Samson has collected many of the poems and other references to this exploit, ranging down through the years in widely scattered publications too numerous to list here.

crusades. Contending loyalties drove old friends in diverging directions, or brought former enemies together, producing violent conflicts which displayed the immaturity of the boom town.

The rival journalists of the early years had each enjoyed a generous political or factional backing. A. G. Dauby, a Republican brought from Utica by Colonel Rochester to establish the pioneer weekly *Gazette*, soon became a respected member of St. Luke's. Derrick and Levi Sibley, who bought out that paper in 1821 and renamed it the *Monroe Republican*, were men of the same stamp.<sup>67</sup> Everard Peck of the *Telegraph*, a Yankee Presbyterian with Federalist antecedents,<sup>68</sup> early entrusted the politics of his paper to Thurlow Weed, whose skill in drawing the Clinton and Adams factions into the People's party of 1824 upset the former Bucktail majority and made the *Telegraph* the leading paper in western New York at the mid-decade, enabling it to venture on a semi-weekly edition.<sup>69</sup>

The rapidly shifting scene, both in the village and the state, soon raised complications. The breach between Governor Clinton and President Adams severely tried Weed's political strategy on the *Telegraph*, acquired in 1825 in partnership with Robert Martin, a recent arrival from Albany.<sup>70</sup> Another newcomer, Daniel Sprague, established the professedly non-partisan *Album* late that year,<sup>71</sup> while the conciliatory temperament of young Edwin Scrantom, who took over the *Republican* at this time,<sup>72</sup> may have accelerated the shift of some of its more respectable backers into the Adams camp. Indeed, the differences between these papers gradually became less distinct until the *Telegraph* absorbed the *Republican* early in 1827, launching finally a daily edition.<sup>73</sup>

The reputation of the booming town had meanwhile attracted a new and ambitious journalistic venture, the *Daily Advertiser*, in 1826. When Luther Tucker and Henry C. Sleight of Jamaica, Long Island, chose the Genesee canal port as the site for a daily paper, there was scarcely a precedent for such an undertaking in any interior settlement.<sup>74</sup> Never-

<sup>67</sup> *Gazette*, May 30, 1820-Feb. 13, 1821; *Monroe Republican*, August, 1825-Aug. 1, 1826.

<sup>68</sup> *Telegraph*, July, 1818-Jan. 4, 1829.

<sup>69</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 95-111, 157-162; *Telegraph*, Dec. 10, 1822, Oct. 19, Nov. 30, 1824.

<sup>70</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, p. 202; *Telegraph*, Sept. 6, 1825.

<sup>71</sup> *Album*, Nov. 10, 1825-Oct. 3, 1826; Oct. 8, 1827-July 22, 1828.

<sup>72</sup> H. Scrantom, *Journal*, July 27, Aug. 2, 1825.

<sup>73</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, May 3, 1827; June-November, 1828.

<sup>74</sup> Frequent reference to the *Advertiser* as the first daily west of Albany requires modification, for a short-lived Cincinnati daily had recently suspended, while the *National Banner* of Nashville was alternating between a daily and semi-weekly program. See Winifred Gregory, ed., *Union List of Newspapers* (New York, 1937); *New York Evening Post*, Oct. 31, 1826.

theless, Rochester's prospects appeared favorable, and Luther Tucker, the active member of the firm, moved to Rochester that fall, bringing with him as editor Henry O'Reilly, a twenty-year-old Irish immigrant whose ten years in New York had been marked by a precocious advance in the printer's trade. The new paper, designed as a commercial journal, independent in politics, attracted favorable notice in Eastern journals, further stimulating village growth.<sup>75</sup>

The *Daily Advertiser* quickly became involved in local political quarrels. The volatile personality of its young editor would have made an indifferent attitude unlikely, even without the explosive forces which then animated the village, but the developments themselves amply justified the paper's increasing partisanship. The same forces prompted the launching of several new weeklies, advocates of one or another aspect of local controversies. Such was the *Rochester Observer*, started in 1827 to agitate for moral reform, pledging its profits to the missionary cause.<sup>76</sup> A *Paul Pry*<sup>77</sup> appeared briefly during the succeeding year, badgering the editors and readers of the *Observer*. The *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*,<sup>78</sup> established early in 1828, endeavored to make political and journalistic capital out of the discomfiture of the Masons, while the *Craftsman*<sup>79</sup> appeared a year later in their defense. Possibly no town of its size in the country surpassed Rochester in the number of its journalistic offerings in the late twenties.

As the enterprise of the six printing offices and thirty-one printers employed in the village in 1827 was not wholly absorbed by these newspaper ventures, several operated bookstores and lending libraries, and Everard Peck had in addition a prosperous paper mill.<sup>80</sup> The different firms eagerly undertook the publication of broadsides and pamphlets, while books that gave promise of attracting buyers were patiently turned out, a few pages a day.<sup>81</sup> Everard Peck, the most energetic, printed at least thirty books and pamphlets before 1827. His first book, *The Whole Duty of Woman*,<sup>82</sup> appeared in 1819, two years after Dauby had issued the eight-page *Constitution and Proceedings of the Charitable*

<sup>75</sup> Henry O'Reilly, "American Journalism," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VI, 279-290; Mary B. Sleight, "Henry C. Sleight," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VI, 273-279; Edward R. Foreman, "O'Reilly Documents," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 123-145.

<sup>76</sup> *Observer*, Feb. 17, 1827-Sept. 19, 1832.

<sup>77</sup> *Craftsman*, Oct. 13, 1829.

<sup>78</sup> *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, Mar. 4, 1828; Sept. 15, 1829-Nov. 1, 1831, when it was renamed the *Inquirer*.

<sup>79</sup> *Craftsman*, Feb. 10, 1829-February, 1831.

<sup>80</sup> *Album*, Dec. 25, 1827.

<sup>81</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>82</sup> Donald B. Gilchrist, "The First Book Printed in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 275-280. The full title is *The Whole Duty of Woman: A New Edition, with Considerable Improvements to which is added, Edwin and Angelina: A Tale* (Rochester: Printed and sold by E. Peck & Co., 1819).

*Society*, the first pamphlet printed in the village.<sup>83</sup> Peck started a series of almanacs in 1820, introducing Oliver Loud as a new and able philomath in 1822 and illustrating the months with a unique series of wood cuts depicting rural life.<sup>84</sup> At least a dozen sermons and as many religious tracts, two medical handbooks, three pamphlets dealing with civic affairs, eight school books, and one novel were printed in these years by Peck and his rivals.<sup>85</sup> Aside from the sermons and the pamphlets, the first book to be written in Rochester was probably *The Columbian Arithmetick*, prepared by a local schoolmaster, Thomas A Filer.<sup>86</sup>

The year 1827 brought a sudden increase in local publications. A score of Rochester imprints that year contrasted with the half dozen or so in previous years. Eight daily and weekly papers attained circulations of more than 1000 copies in a few cases.<sup>87</sup> For three years the Rochester presses literally hummed with activity as the printers reaped war profits from the raging journalistic battles which burst forth over the abduction of William Morgan.



Masonic societies appeared among the earliest institutions brought by the settlers into the Genesee Country. The first lodge in the area was organized at Canandaigua in 1792,<sup>88</sup> and several others were instituted before a movement developed in 1815 for a lodge at Rochester. Though the application remained unanswered by the Grand Lodge, of which DeWitt Clinton then served as grand master, until June 5, 1817, Wells Lodge, No. 282, speedily perfected its organization at the Mansion House in the settlement's first year of villagehood. Less than two years later a second lodge, Hamilton Chapter, No. 62, Royal Arch Masons, formed in the village, while a third appeared in 1826 on the eve of the outbreak of the Morgan controversy.<sup>89</sup> By that date, nine lodges flourished in the county and many more in the surrounding territory.

The Rochester lodges attracted a varied membership, including many

<sup>83</sup> [Edward R. Foreman], "Check List of Rochester Publications," R. H. S., *Pub.*, V, 176; Douglas C. McMurtrie, *Rochester Imprints: 1819-1850: in Libraries Outside of Rochester* (Chicago, 1935), pp. 13-19.

<sup>84</sup> Blake McKelvey, "Early Almanacs of Rochester," *Rochester History*, January, 1941. Peck's almanac started as a modified version of the Andrew Beers series issued in Canandaigua, Utica, etc. for several years previously; but starting in 1822 the almanac, finally named the *Western Alamanack* in 1824, was distinctly a local product.

<sup>85</sup> Foreman, "Check List," pp. 175-181; McMurtrie, *Rochester Imprints*.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas A. Filer, *The Columbian Arithmetick* (Rochester; Everard Peck, 1826), Univ. Rochester.

<sup>87</sup> *Album*, Apr. 4, 1826; *Democrat*, Jan. 4, 1837.

<sup>88</sup> W. H. McIntosh, *History of Ontario County* (Philadelphia, 1876), p. 63.

<sup>89</sup> John B. Mullan, "Early Masonic History in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 7-11.



leaders of the community. In fact, the lodges were almost alone in bringing together men of opposing parties and rival sects—Abelard Reynolds, Vincent Mathews, William Atkinson, Jonathan Child, the Reverend Francis Cuming, the Reverend Comfort Williams, Elisha Ely, Azel Ensworth, and E. B. Strong among others.<sup>90</sup> There were apparently fewer Presbyterian than Episcopalian Masons and fewer Clintonians than Bucktails, though notable exceptions (DeWitt Clinton himself) stood out. Very likely the organization's growing influence had much to do with the gradual rapprochement between Bucktail Republicans and Clintonians in western New York after 1825.

Among those admitted to Wells Lodge in Rochester was a middle-aged stone mason destined to play a central role in the violent Anti-masonic outburst soon to occur. William Morgan, a migrant from Virginia who had recently seen his brewery in York (Toronto) across the lake go up in smoke, was attracted to Rochester in 1822 by the opportunity for employment on the aqueduct.<sup>91</sup> Full of wit and sociability, Morgan gained many friends and rapidly advanced through the successive Masonic degrees, but as his economic achievements proved less gratifying he soon moved his family to Batavia where rents seemed more reasonable. The idea of cashing in on his Masonic secrets was apparently first conceived early in 1826 when he approached Thurlow Weed with such a proposition. Rebuffed on that occasion and disappointed in an application for employment on a new Masonic hall in LeRoy, Morgan was again offended by his failure to gain admittance to the Royal Arch Chapter in Batavia. When the plan to publish the secrets of Masonry was revived, David C. Miller, publisher of the *Republican Advocate* in Batavia, agreed to undertake the job.<sup>92</sup>

Widespread jealousy of the fraternal advantages enjoyed by the Masons and repeated criticism of their secret oaths assured the Morgan revelations a sensational reception. News of the venture spread quickly through the scattered lodges, and when efforts to dissuade Morgan and Miller failed, a copy of the completed portion of the book was secured by stealth and brought to Rochester for examination. Robert Martin, Weed's Masonic partner on the *Telegraph*, rushed it to the General Grand Chapter in New York, where he received instructions to return the copy and assume an indifferent attitude in an attempt to ride out any storm its publication might create. But the advice came too late to head off the efforts of neighboring Masons to discipline their renegade member.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Gliddon, *History of Hamilton Chapter No. 62, Royal Arch Masons* (Rochester, 1879), pp. 3-25.

<sup>91</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIII, 188-189.

<sup>92</sup> Robert D. Burns, "The Abduction of William Morgan," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VI, 219-221; Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>93</sup> Burns, "William Morgan," pp. 222-230; Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 215ff.

Rochester inevitably became the center of the popular outburst which followed Morgan's disappearance. Indignation mounted as the story was gradually pieced together that fall: how he had been abducted from Batavia by Ontario Masons to face trumped-up charges in Canandaigua, and how after his release there he had been spirited through Rochester in the early morning of September 13th and lodged in a magazine of old Fort Niagara, from which he disappeared forever a few days later.<sup>94</sup> At least two Rochester Masons, Burrage Smith, a grocer, and John Whitney, a stone mason, were actively involved in the abduction, although their names did not immediately become known.<sup>95</sup>

Many good Masons, innocent of any participation in the affair and confident that their brothers had simply persuaded Morgan to seek a new home abroad, resented the popular condemnation of their society. Others, less ignorant of the circumstances but persuaded that Morgan could have received no more than his deserts, sought to protect the good name of the organization by aiding the active culprits to flee the country.<sup>96</sup> By coincidence, a group of Rochester Masons chartered the *Ontario* for a trip to Lewiston to take part in a Masonic installation which occurred in the midst of the affair. Young Edwin Scrantom, a member of the party, apparently gained but an inkling of the predicament which faced the western Masons after the refusal of their Canadian brethren to receive Morgan. Some, better acquainted with the facts, could see no reason why the threatening informer, Edward Giddins, should not be paid the bribe he demanded for silence.<sup>97</sup>

Initiative in the search for the guilty persons was early assumed by committees of correspondence appointed at indignation meetings in the various towns. The Batavia and Canandaigua committees were the first in the field, but Bates Cooke of the Lewiston committee and Samuel Works, Hervey Ely, Dr. F. F. Backus, Frederick Whittlesey, and Thurlow Weed of the Rochester committee quickly assumed leadership.<sup>98</sup> As the details of the crime began to emerge, the reluctance of some Masons in key positions to prosecute their brethren became more apparent, sharpening the popular indignation against the order. Nevertheless, a trial of three persons accused of participation in Morgan's abduction from Canandaigua was staged at the Ontario Court House

<sup>94</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 215ff.; Henry Brown, *A Narrative of the Anti-Masonic Excitement* (Batavia, 1829), pp. 29-34, 38-43; Robert Morris, LL.D., *William Morgan, or Political Anti-Masonry* (New York, 1883), pp. 55-112.

<sup>95</sup> Burns, "William Morgan," pp. 228-229.

<sup>96</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 242, 245-247.

<sup>97</sup> *Trial of P. Whitney, T. Shaw, N. Beach, William Miller and S. M. Chubbuck for the Abduction . . . of William Morgan before the Special Court at Lockport, Feb., 1831* (Lockport), pp. 31 and *passim*.

<sup>98</sup> Brown, *Anti-Masonic Excitement*, pp. 60-64; Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 225, 230.

in January, 1827. The heaviest snow of ten years blanketed the countryside, blocking many of the roads, yet the case attracted such a crowd that half the visitors could not find beds in Canandaigua.<sup>99</sup> Over one hundred witnesses were examined, and convictions were finally secured, though popular wrath mounted when it was learned that the evidence uncovered had only substantiated misdemeanor charges and that sentences ranging from one month to two years had closed the trail.<sup>100</sup>

The potentialities of the controversy became more evident as the year advanced. Despite open threats against several witnesses, which strengthened suspicions that Morgan had met a violent end,<sup>101</sup> a convention of investigating committees at Lewiston gathered additional evidence. Yet new attempts at court action were frustrated in one way or another, and the flight of some of the suspected Masons, including Whitney and Smith of Rochester, fanned resentment against the order.<sup>102</sup>

The first proscriptive measures against all Masons gained little favor, however, since popular concern still centered on Morgan's fate. Though scattered meetings in rural communities during the early spring rallied voters against any and all Masons who stood for public office, the Rochester committee, apparently worried lest such a move split the Clintonian party and destroy its scant majority in the county, endeavored to head off the movement. Their fears seemed justified when Dr. Backus, a committee member who had long served as village treasurer, was defeated in May, 1827, by a Bucktail Mason. Nevertheless, the committee hesitated to launch an open political venture, though the proposition was frequently considered that summer.<sup>103</sup> In similar fashion the first murmurings against Masonic parsons wholly innocent of the crime helped to rally sober men to their defense.<sup>104</sup> Yet deep-seated emotions were being stirred up and reputations were being staked on one side or the other, seriously aggravating the controversy. The Genesee Country gained a new sobriquet, the "Infected Area," and distant observers began to fear the spread of the malady.<sup>105</sup>



In Rochester the issue quickly became the center of a bitter politico-journalistic quarrel. At least twelve editions of Morgan's *Illustrations of*

<sup>99</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 5, 1827; L. W. Sibley to A. Reynolds, Jan. 5, 1827, Reynolds Papers; Brown, *Anti-Masonic Excitement*, pp. 74-88.

<sup>100</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 231-237, 241-242; Brown, *Anti-Masonic Excitement*, pp. 84-89; Morris, *William Morgan*, pp. 113-202.

<sup>101</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 243-248.

<sup>102</sup> Weed, pp. 242-243, 249, 299-300; Brown, pp. 221-224.

<sup>103</sup> Weed, pp. 242-243, 249, 299-300; Brown, pp. 221-224.

<sup>104</sup> Weed, p. 249; Brown, pp. 239-244.

<sup>105</sup> Charles McCarthy, "The Antimasonic Party: A Study of Political Antimasonry in the United States, 1827-1840," *Am. Hist. Assoc., Annual Report*, 1902, I, 372ff.

Masonry were brought out in the village during 1827, while four other Antimasonic publications added to the profits of local printers that year.<sup>106</sup> Thurlow Weed was restrained by his partner and the clients of the *Telegraph*, though his early outspoken editorials on the abduction had made him a prominent member of the local Morgan committee.<sup>107</sup> O'Reilly on the *Advertiser*, while urging a vigorous prosecution of the guilty, attempted to steer a moderate course, declaring that "for our part we can by no means follow the fashion of some editors in branding societies with the guilt of a few."<sup>108</sup> An exchange of views between these rival editors became sufficiently bitter to cause O'Reilly to seek a less contentious post in the East, but news that Weed had sold his interests in the *Telegraph* and proposed to remove to Utica prompted the young Irishman's hasty return.<sup>109</sup> The issue, it appeared, was acquiring disfavor, as public opinion swung against the agitators during the late summer.

But the September lull disappeared when the full fury of the storm burst a month later. Despite Weed's failure to receive encouragement in Utica, the Rochester committee determined to run an Antimasonic slate in the fall elections, and a Monroe County convention gathered at Rochester for that purpose in September. Although several leading Clintonians refused to lend their names to the cause, the opportunist, Timothy Childs of Rochester, consented to accept the convention's nomination to the legislature, adding it to his earlier endorsement by a local Bucktail faction. There seemed, nevertheless, little hope for victory against the regular Clintonian candidates until the "infected region" was again inflamed by the rumor that Morgan's body had at last been found on the shore of Lake Ontario.<sup>110</sup>

A body had indeed washed up near the outlet of Oak Orchard Creek early in October, more than a year after Morgan's final disappearance. A hastily organized coroner's jury failed to identify the corpse, which was duly buried before Dame Rumor linked it with the missing victim of Masonry. At that suggestion the Rochester committee sprang into action, quickly uncovering the grave for a second inquest at which numerous witnesses, including the unfortunate "widow," were examined. The body was now proclaimed to be that of the long-lost Morgan.<sup>111</sup> But scarcely had the Antimasonic forces buried their martyr

<sup>106</sup> Foreman, "Check List," pp. 181-184.

<sup>107</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 210-212, 213-214.

<sup>108</sup> *Rochester Mercury*, Jan. 23, 1827. This is the sole remaining issue of the short-lived weekly edition of the *Advertiser*.

<sup>109</sup> Luther Tucker to Henry O'Reilly, Rochester, Sept. 19, 1837, O'Reilly Documents, No. 2447, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>110</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 299-302; *Observer*, Oct. 20, 1827; *Album*, Oct. 23, 1827.

<sup>111</sup> *Album*, Oct. 30, 1827; Brown, *Anti-Masonic Excitement*, pp. 167-176.

in state at Batavia when the widow of one Timothy Monro, drowned in the Niagara five weeks before, laid claim to the corpse. Weed received assurance from the leading Antimason of Lewiston that the body could not possibly be identified as Monro,<sup>112</sup> yet a second Rochester committee, headed by Jacob Gould,<sup>113</sup> collaborated with others in staging a third inquest which upset the former findings and pronounced the body that of Monro.

Readers could take their choice, declared Daniel Sprague of the *Album*, but they must know that it was now purely a political question. Editor O'Reilly of the *Advertiser* branded the renewed agitation of the Morgan question as an unprincipled attempt to inflame the public solely for political ends.<sup>114</sup> Apparently the findings of the third inquest came too late to reverse the trend, for the Antimason, Timothy Childs, won his legislative seat.<sup>115</sup> Moreover the fortunes of the new political faction were greatly enhanced by the national election one year off.

Indeed, the rising tide of Jacksonian sentiment was giving a new significance and imparting a new intensity to political struggles throughout the land. Though his paper was still restrained by its Eastern backer from taking a partisan stand, O'Reilly himself assisted in organizing a local Jackson committee, and at daybreak on January 8, 1828, a military salute was fired from the Rochester bridge in commemoration of Jackson's victory at New Orleans.<sup>116</sup> Sprague of the *Album*, abandoning his non-partisan stand, gave space to lengthy endorsements of Clay's American System and bitter attacks on General Jackson, occasionally pointing a scornful finger at "that little fellow" who, as editor of the *Advertiser*, was so sympathetic to the Masons and so appreciative of the theatrical troupe which had recently visited Rochester.<sup>117</sup> Frederick Whittlesey, Scrantom's successor on the *Republican*, was diverted by his Morgan committee associates from earlier Jacksonian leanings into the new Antimasonic party.<sup>118</sup> Only Robert Martin of the *Telegraph* remained steadfast to the formerly dominant Clintonians, vainly seeking to disparage the Antimasonic uproar. Martin's embarrassment over Clinton's split with Adams and growing favor for Jackson was removed by the Governor's death in February, 1828. Thereupon the *Daily Telegraph* stood forth as the leading administration paper, rallying the support of the established villagers, especially after the Rochester

<sup>112</sup> Bates Cook to Thurlow Weed, Lewiston, Oct. 24, 30, 1827, Weed Letters, Univ. Rochester.

<sup>113</sup> Kelsey, *Lives and Reminiscences*, pp. 64-66; obituary in *Union and Advertiser*, Nov. 18, 1867.

<sup>114</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 3, 6, 1827.

<sup>115</sup> *Album*, Nov. 6, 20, 1827.

<sup>116</sup> O'Reilly Documents, No. 37e.

<sup>117</sup> *Album*, Nov. 27, Dec. 18, 25, 1827; Jan. 15, 1828.

<sup>118</sup> *Anti-Masonic Almanack for 1828* (Rochester: Edwin Scrantom, 1827).

family was finally brought into the Adams fold by the President's timely appointment of William B. Rochester as minister to Guatemala. But Martin and his friends could only hope that the Antimasonic infection would not prove fatal.<sup>119</sup>

The virus of Antimasonry seemed to operate locally much after the fashion of the well-known fever and ague. New victims of the malady frequently wandered about as if dazed, failing to recognize old friends; or they might suddenly be prostrated by fits of self-righteousness, such as that experienced by Edward Giddins, a Niagara Mason whose confession was prompted by a refusal of his Masonic brethren to pay \$3000 for his silence. Coming to Rochester late in 1827, Giddins coöperated with Edwin Scrantom, now an ex-Mason, in publishing an *Anti-Masonic Almanack* in which the Giddins confession and an account of the abduction, replete with all the gory details, crowded out the customary proverbs and rustic wit as well as allusions to the weather. Over ten thousand copies of the inflammatory almanac, illustrated by scurrilous wood cuts, were peddled far and wide by zealous party agents.<sup>120</sup>

The time seemed at last ripe for the launching in February, 1828, of Weed's *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, a weekly devoted almost exclusively to the establishment of a new political order free from the evils of Masonry. Possibly the limited number of advertisements appearing in the *Enquirer* reflected the hostility of the merchant class to the Antimasonic crusade, though several devoted supporters stood by, notably Elder Bissell whose land holdings and six-day stage line were frequently advertised. Generally three of the four pages were available for lengthy speeches and sermons attacking the Masons, extended accounts of the successive trials and abortive court actions which were still dragging on, extracts from distant papers commenting favorably on the agitation, and any other items the diligent *Enquirer* could uncover concerning the abuses of Masonry.<sup>121</sup> However much it offended the sensibilities of moderate men, the weekly propaganda sheet was providing Weed with "a reputation not much behind that of the great protestant reformer," or at least that was how his Antimasonic friend in the legislature, Timothy Childs, put it.<sup>122</sup>



The agitation was bearing its fruit—bushels of knotty little spites, the bitter products of the Antimasonic inquisition. When open political lines appeared for the first time in the village election of 1828, the Anti-

<sup>119</sup> *Telegraph*, Jan. 28, 1828–February, 1829; McCarthy, "Antimasonic Party," *Am. Hist. Assoc., Report*, 1902, I, 367–559.

<sup>120</sup> *Anti-Masonic Almanack for 1828*.

<sup>121</sup> *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, Mar. 4, 1828, and a score of other issues to Dec. 2, 1828.

<sup>122</sup> Timothy Childs to Weed, Albany, Mar. 27, 1828, Weed Letters.

masonic ticket, to the surprise of many, carried the day.<sup>123</sup> The lodges were called upon to surrender their charters,<sup>124</sup> and a legislative investigation of the case was demanded by Timothy Childs. Several new trials were instituted (that against the Reverend Francis Cuming of St. Luke's was apparently groundless),<sup>125</sup> while the confessed accomplice, Giddins, remained free to plan an even more invidious *Almanac* for 1829.<sup>126</sup> Charges that Weed had received \$2400 from the friends of Clay to finance his paper and that he had described the body tossed up by the lake as "good enough Morgan until after the election," prompted a suit for libel against Tucker and O'Reilly. Though the suit was never brought to trial, the redheaded Irishman, O'Reilly, could never after forget the bitterness of that season.<sup>127</sup>

The Antimasons displayed fertility in the development of new appeals. Fourth of July celebrations, previously non-political, in 1828 featured open attacks on Masonry as un-American and anti-democratic.<sup>128</sup> The contrary views of the *Advertiser* were dismissed as the "opinions of our foreign editor," although O'Reilly secured his naturalization papers that July.<sup>129</sup> The pulpit, or at least a number of zealous clerics, rallied to the task of identifying Masonry with irreligion, intemperance, and other flagrant evils of the day.<sup>130</sup> A large painting, depicting the ritualistic sacrifice of Morgan in a Masonic ceremony, appeared in the new Exchange Building on the Rochester bridge.<sup>131</sup> The occasional resignations of Masons seeking escape from persecution were hailed as confessions of guilt, and such individuals were joyfully welcomed as repentant sinners into the Antimasonic fold.<sup>132</sup> Finally a new political weekly, the *Monroe Democrat*, was launched with the obvious design of confusing unwary Democrats by its attacks on Jackson.<sup>133</sup>

But the struggle proved in many respects a typical three-cornered political contest with the ablest strategist favored to win. Weed and O'Reilly each received advice from state and national leaders, and each

<sup>123</sup> *Enquirer*, May 6, 1828.

<sup>124</sup> *Enquirer*, Apr. 15, 29, 1828.

<sup>125</sup> *Enquirer*, Apr. 15, Oct. 7, 1828; *Advertiser and Telegraph*, July 28, 1829. The Reverend Cuming resigned at this time because of embarrassment over the Morgan issue.

<sup>126</sup> *Anti-Masonic Almanack for 1829*.

<sup>127</sup> *Advertiser*, June 18, 30, July 4, 1828; "Good Enough Morgan," MS, O'Reilly Documents, Nos. 2110-2116; Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 319-320, 350-354.

<sup>128</sup> *LeRoy Gazette*, July 10, 1828 (Samson Scrapbook, No. 45, p. 93); Morris, *William Morgan*, pp. 249-308.

<sup>129</sup> *Telegraph*, Sept. 9, 1828; O'Reilly Doc., No. 663.

<sup>130</sup> Joel Parker, *Signs of the Times*, pp. 11-16.

<sup>131</sup> *Enquirer*, July 15, 1828.

<sup>132</sup> *Enquirer*, Oct. 20, 1829; Aug. 10, 17, 1830 (on Nov. 1, 1831, the *Enquirer* became the *Inquirer*); Dec. 27, 1831; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Mar. 11, 1834.

<sup>133</sup> *Monroe Democrat*, Sept. 2, 1828.

endeavored to woo the Clintonian faction.<sup>134</sup> The Clintonians, however, appeared to hold the upper hand during the summer. When they staged a "Great Republican Meeting" in Christopher's long room late in June, so large was the crowd that it became necessary to adjourn to the Court House yard where fifteen hundred congregated in Rochester's first open air mass meeting. The aged proprietor, serving as chairman, indignantly repudiated Jackson, declaring that Republicans would not support "the election of a chief magistrate for military renown only," for that, he declared, would be "fatal to our freedom." Congressman Daniel D. Barnard condemned the Antimasonic agitation of Weed and Clay as an effort to split the Adams forces.<sup>135</sup> Local Jacksonians likewise staged a Republican Meeting, though it was not as well attended as that of the Adams supporters.<sup>136</sup> Meanwhile the Rochester Morgan committee called a state Antimasonic convention and, failing to agree with the former Clintonians on a candidate for governor, nominated Southwick for that post and Timothy Childs for Congress but switched at the last moment from Clay to Adams for president.<sup>137</sup>

The election brought together some strange bedfellows. Colonel Rochester now found himself working again with Elisha Ely and William Atkinson, and he could at last greet Elisha B. Strong with some cordiality. St. Luke's members rejoiced in the strength of First Presbyterian, and both smiled benignly at the Methodists and Baptists and over the growth of Second and Third Presbyterian churches and St. Paul's, for were they not practically all good Adams men—some of them a little overzealous about the evils of Masonry, but Adams men none the less?<sup>138</sup>

The contest became more intense and bitter as the election approached. When the Jackson-Van Buren supporters bought out Henry Sleight's interest in the *Advertiser* in September, enabling it to step forth as the unrestrained spokesman of that party, the deal was made the occasion for an Antimasonic handbill in which Weed and his associates accused Tucker, Gould, Bowman, Gardiner, and other local Jacksonians of raising \$1500 to bribe the electors of Monroe County—a charge not publicly retracted until eight months after the election.<sup>139</sup> Public ad-

<sup>134</sup> B. Skidmore to Weed, New York, Aug. 1, 1828; A. Erwin to Weed, Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 23, 1828, Weed Letters; William B. Lewis to O'Reilly, Nashville, July 30, 1828; E. Croswell to O'Reilly, Albany, Apr. 7, 1828, O'Reilly Doc.

<sup>135</sup> *The Great Republican Meeting in Rochester* (Rochester, 1828); *Album*, July 8, 1828; *Advertiser*, July 2, 1828. O'Reilly attributed Colonel Rochester's conversion to the Adams camp to the latter's appointment of William B. Rochester to the Panama and Guatemala mission, reasoning which added to the bitterness of that campaign.

<sup>136</sup> *Album*, June 17, 1828.

<sup>137</sup> *Enquirer*, Oct. 21, 1828; Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 302-307, 353-354.

<sup>138</sup> *Telegraph*, Oct. 18, 1828.

<sup>139</sup> *Handbill*, Oct. 10, 1828; *Advertiser*, Oct. 16, 1828; O'Reilly Doc. No. 2110.



dresses to the electors by Matthew Brown, Timothy Childs, and Thurlow Weed appeared in prominent five-inch columns of bold type in the *Enquirer*, while the first local use of flare headlines<sup>140</sup> sharply differentiated the political and typographical ingenuity of that sheet from its more conservative rivals which still sandwiched their traditional six- and eight-pica editorials in among the more legible advertisements. Jackson supporters, not known as Masons, were derided as "Mason Jacks," while Masons were challenged to wear their leather aprons. In retaliation, Weed and his aides were followed by Jacksonians carrying large shears and razors—a burlesque of the alleged shearing of the corpse to make it look like Morgan.<sup>141</sup> Heated tavern arguments frequently became violent, and a local blacksmith broke Frederick Wittlesey's nose in a fracas at the polls.<sup>142</sup>

When the Rochester vote was tallied, the political success of Weed and his associates became clearly evident. Not only had the rural sections swung almost solidly to the new party, but Gates and Brighton, the two Rochester townships, were safely in the Antimasonic fold. Childs was sent as the first Antimason to Washington and the party increased its strength at Albany.<sup>143</sup> Yet despite the Genesee vote, Van Buren was elected governor, and New York gave the majority of its electoral support to the victorious Jackson.

Those who supposed that the controversy would subside after the election were soon disillusioned.<sup>144</sup> Weed's consummate political skill was, if possible, even more evident in the re-shuffling of forces following the election than during the thick of the battle. Thus, while local Jacksonians were busy negotiating a consolidation of the *Telegraph* with the *Advertiser*,<sup>145</sup> Weed collected new subscriptions for his *Enquirer* from among the old readers of the *Telegraph* and the now defunct *Album*, whose editor soon joined the new party. For the first time the Antimasonic paper secured numerous advertisements.<sup>146</sup> And while O'Reilly was in Washington seeking local appointments for staunch Jacksonians such as Elwood and Gould, but thereby offending the old Republican postmaster, Abelard Reynolds,<sup>147</sup> Weed threw his support to such moderate Jacksonians as his former friend, Addison Gardiner,

<sup>140</sup> *Enquirer*, Oct. 21, 28, 1828.

<sup>141</sup> "Reminiscences of Darius Perrin," *Post-Express*, Aug. 20, 1892.

<sup>142</sup> T. W. Barnes, *Memoir of Thurlow Weed* (Boston, 1884), pp. 30-31.

<sup>143</sup> *Enquirer*, Nov. 11, Dec. 2, 1828.

<sup>144</sup> Brown, *Anti-Masonic Excitement*, pp. 228-239; Dixon Ryan Fox, *The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York* (New York, 1919), pp. 337-351.

<sup>145</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1828; Jan. 29, 1829.

<sup>146</sup> *Enquirer*, Dec. 2, 1828; and subsequent issues.

<sup>147</sup> *Enquirer*, Apr. 6, 1830; Abelard Reynolds statement (photostat), Reynolds Papers, No. 787; Petition to retain Reynolds, *Reynolds Papers*, No. 728.







thus securing the appointment of judges and other local officials who would in time become more congenial to his leadership.<sup>148</sup>

Meanwhile the crusade against Freemasonry continued. The issue invaded a meeting of the Rochester Presbytery in February, 1829, and pastors affiliated with the organization were called upon to renounce their vows or surrender their churches.<sup>149</sup> Apparently St. Luke's made no such request, but Francis Cuming tendered his resignation in order to safeguard the parish from obloquy.<sup>150</sup> A new weekly, *The Craftsman*, started with the avowed purpose of opposing the inquisition, made little headway against the prevailing tide.<sup>151</sup>

Finally, in a determined effort at conciliation, the ten lodges in Monroe County, "after deliberate discussion and anxious reflection . . . unanimously arrived at the conclusion that Public Opinion at this time unequivocally calls upon them to renounce their Masonic rights."<sup>152</sup>

It is not to be disguised [their announcement continued], that this concession has cost us a considerable effort, particularly while smarting under the lash of persecution and proscription; but appealing as we do to the justice of an enlightened community it is due to the dignity of the tribunal before which we are thrown to stifle the suggestions of private grief at the shrine of public duty. . . . That a virtuous indignation should have been roused by the commission of the offense in question, was both natural and laudable . . . but the evil to which this feeling has been liable is to confound the innocent with the guilty. . . . Under its baleful influence Reason seems to have lost her empire and Charity to have resigned her seat. . . .

Our appeal is to the Friends of Peace and Good Order; and if the waters of strife are to be poured out, without reserve, embittering all the relations of life—if an unrelenting crusade is to be carried on against a numerous and respectable portion of our fellowmen, merely on account of their speculative opinions—the responsibility will not rest upon us.

Seldom have more lofty sentiments emerged from a bitter quarrel. While touches of melodrama were present together with some political chicanery, it was not to be denied that the villagers who signed the address—William B. Rochester, Vincent Mathews, Jacob Gould, and Robert Martin among others—displayed a maturity of spirit unknown to the Rochester of a few years before. Several cubits had been added to the stature of the community during the decade of intermittent internal strife and booming growth. Perhaps the fact that the rate of

<sup>148</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, pp. 337-340.

<sup>149</sup> *Enquirer*, Feb. 24, 1829.

<sup>150</sup> *Advertiser*, July 28, 1829.

<sup>151</sup> *The Craftsman*, Feb. 10, 1829.

<sup>152</sup> *Address of Freemasons of Monroe County to the Public on Returning their Charters* (Rochester, 1829).

its physical expansion was already tapering off helped to contribute to the increasing sobriety, but rarely would Rochester again be stirred to the excesses of the controversy of 1827 and 1828.

To be sure, the Antimasons could not so readily drop their advantage. The return of the charters was hailed as a triumph for that party and held up as a goal to be sought by more distant communities into which the party now advanced with expanding ambition.<sup>153</sup> Even in Rochester the issue was not permitted to rest, and in the legislative campaign of 1829 charges of complicity in the Morgan case were again leveled at any who dared oppose the Antimasonic candidates. Jacob Gould was singled out on this occasion for the alleged offense of diverting Masonic charity funds to the abductors in order to assist their escape.<sup>154</sup> Gould's suit against Weed for the slander ultimately secured a judgment of \$400,<sup>155</sup> but meanwhile that political genius had won his local campaign for a legislative seat at Albany and was seldom thereafter to return to the mill town on the Genesee.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>153</sup> *Enquirer*, Mar. 28, Apr. 7, 1829; Feb. 16, 1830; Weed, *Autobiography*, 336-349ff.; McCarthy, "Antimasonic Party," pp. 391-456; Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850*, pp. 86-133.

<sup>154</sup> *Enquirer*, Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27, 1829.

<sup>155</sup> *Enquirer*, Sept. 20, 27, 1831; *Inquirer*, Dec. 6, 1831; Mar. 13, 1832.

<sup>156</sup> *Enquirer*, Nov. 17, 1829; May 11, 30, July 6, 1830.

## CHAPTER VII

### CREATING A CITY

1829-1834<sup>1</sup>

THE EARLY THIRTIES presented Rochester with two major and extremely complicated situations: a sharp decline in its rate of growth and inadequate institutions. Fairly successful adjustments were made within the next five years, although the community's attention was more constantly focussed on yet another matter: the moral responsibilities and social behavior of its members. The westward sweep of religious wildfire, kindled in central New York in 1824, reached Rochester by the end of the decade, displacing the Antimasonic furor of the late twenties with religious and social ferment. If much of the evangelistic ardor of these years was spent by 1834, when Rochester, the Flour City, emerged as the economic capital of a flourishing region, the community had at least begun to sense new democratic and humanitarian opportunities.

#### WAY STATION FOR WESTWARD MIGRANTS

By 1829, Rochester had to a considerable extent realized the early commercial advantages of its site. The stream of migrants brought by the canal continued to sweep westward, creating new boom towns further inland. Yet the population sources of the East were by no means exhausted, and large migrations were just beginning to stem from Europe, so that, in losing its early position as the leading market town of the Northwestern frontier, Rochester became a major provisioning station for the ever swelling westward movement. Though the unprecedented rate of its earlier population increase was not maintained, as soon as the shock of its slower pace was absorbed, healthy growth returned.

The disillusionment of 1829 proved in many respects the dominant factor in the town's history during the period. Not only was the problem of achieving a stable community complicated by social and spiritual

<sup>1</sup>I am here borrowing the title of an unpublished M.A. thesis written at the University of Rochester in 1936 by Mr. Whitney R. Cross, archivist of the Western New York History Collection at Cornell University. The occasional references made below to his "Creating a City: The History of Rochester from 1824 to 1834," do not adequately suggest my considerable indebtedness to his excellent study for its factual and suggestive survey of the period.

stress, but the process of scaling down inflated property values proved a slow and painful experience. Many residents were prompted to pull up stakes and resume the march westward. Nevertheless, all vacancies were quickly overcrowded by newcomers bringing varied skills and fresh optimism. Moreover, the rapidly shifting scene further hastened the development of an urban economic pattern.

The limits of Rochester's geographic horizon first began to appear when the boundless opportunities of the Mississippi Valley and upper Great Lakes' country developed in the early thirties. The multiplication of steam vessels on these two great water routes<sup>2</sup> quickly overshadowed the canal and river facilities of Rochester. Attempts to improve the latter resulted, and a revival of Lake Ontario's trade occurred, but the brighter prospects of several Western river and lake ports could not be denied.<sup>3</sup> The opening of the Welland Canal in 1829 and the completion that year of the Oswego Canal provided an alternate water route to the West, though its challenge to the Erie was not immediately felt.<sup>4</sup> Not only did the migrants from the East as well as the overflow of that section's capital and enterprise push on past the Genesee mill town, but many of Rochester's residents and some of its capital also joined the trek.

Local papers gave frequent notice to this surging movement. From Buffalo came a graphic account in 1833:

Canal boats filled with emigrants, and covered with goods and furniture, are almost hourly arriving. . . . Several steamboats and vessels daily depart for the far west, literally crammed with masses of living beings to people those regions. Some days, near a thousand thus depart. Hundreds and hundreds of horse wagons arrive every spring and fall with emigrants from our own state.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>James L. Barton, *Lake Commerce* (Buffalo, 1846), pp. 6-8. A steamboat association was formed in 1833, employing 11 steamboats valued at \$360,000 on the lakes west of Buffalo. Herbert and Edward Quick, *Mississippi Steamboat: A History of Steamboating on the Mississippi and Its Tributaries* (New York, 1926), pp. 100-104, and *passim*.

<sup>3</sup>*Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXVI (1852), 633-634. None of the lake ports quite equalled Rochester in population by 1840 but all of them grew more rapidly during the thirties: Buffalo from 8,668 to 18,213; Detroit from 2,222 to 9,102; Cleveland from 1,076 to 6,071; and Chicago from a few foresters to 4,470. On the other hand, the river ports, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, and New Orleans, were already well ahead of Rochester and enjoying a vibrant growth, while St. Louis jumped from 6,694 to 16,469. Rochester, it should be noted, grew from 9,207 to 20,191 during the thirties. The U. S. *Census* gave the total population of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan in 1830 as 1,470,018, and by 1840 it had grown to 2,893,783.

<sup>4</sup>D. G. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850*, pp. 247-252; Noble E. Whitford, *History of the Canal System . . . of New York*, chap. vii, "The Oswego Canal."

<sup>5</sup>*Genesee Farmer*, June 9, 1832.



Never before [the same observer wrote a year later] has there been such a crowd of emigration to "the great west" as during this spring. It seems as though the whole eastern country was pouring out its millions for Ohio and Michigan. . . .

I have this spring seen great numbers of good, substantial people from Ontario, Seneca, Livingston, and the central counties of Western New-York, who are emigrating to the west with their families,—more than I have ever known before. They say that they find no difficulty in selling their farms, and at good prices too.<sup>6</sup>

The call of the West was echoing through Rochester in these years. Occasional meetings discussed plans for Rochester colonies in Michigan or Illinois,<sup>7</sup> and although local papers neglected to describe the departures, an astounding number of residents did pull out for the West. Approximately 70 per cent of those listed in the village directory of 1827 moved on before the next directory list appeared in 1834. The migrants were most numerous among the boarders, as only 22 per cent of that group remained, in comparison with 36 per cent of the householders. Yet so rapid was the influx of new arrivals from the East that the total number of names increased from 2,306 to 3,213, while the population mounted from 9,489 to 12,289 during the same period.<sup>8</sup> Even a conservative estimate, heavily weighting the size of the families of those who remained, would class approximately three-fourths of the Rochesterians of 1834 as newcomers within the previous five years.

Back of the rapid turnover was not only the persuasive call of the West but a widespread disillusionment among the villagers. Those without property were the first to move, stimulated no doubt by the slack employment during winter months when the canal stood idle. With the desire to escape one's creditors spurring migration, local justices found themselves overburdened with suits for the collection of small debts or the detention of defaulters. Over 700 such unfortunates were "confined to the jail limits" in 1828.<sup>9</sup>

The task of bringing suit was frequently more troublesome than the debt justified. In an attempt to devise a more effective scheme for collecting loans, a group of creditors formed an association to compile and publish each week a list of the names of small debtors. Aroused and indignant at this proscriptive scheme, a large protest meeting organized a Committee of Equal Rights and Exact Justice to battle the "Shylock Association," as the opposition was dubbed. When the com-

<sup>6</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, May 18, 1833. See also Barton, *Lake Commerce*, pp. 7-8. In 1833 the steamboat association which operated 11 boats out of Buffalo carried 42,956 persons west and 18,529 back to Buffalo.

<sup>7</sup> *Craftsman*, May 5, 1829; *Observer*, Aug. 11, 1831; *Gem*, May 14, 1836.

<sup>8</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1827), (1834). Out of 487 names taken from various sections of the 1827 *Directory*, only 29.6 per cent were found listed in 1834.

<sup>9</sup> *Craftsman*, Feb. 24, Mar. 10, 1829.

mittee quickly enrolled 225 citizens into a Mutual Association pledged to fight for the abolition of imprisonment for debt and for a curb on the use of due bills in wage payments,<sup>10</sup> the sixty "Shylocks" hastily disbanded, private charity was stimulated, and more attention given to the distribution of poor relief as the community awoke to the economic facts of the situation.<sup>11</sup>

Though the conflict was a local expression of a state-wide controversy,<sup>12</sup> the bitterness of the struggle in Rochester was increased by the slowing tempo of the community's growth. The use of due bills, which generally shaved the recipient's real wages by a discount of 20 per cent, was partially restrained for a time.<sup>13</sup> Still greater success marked the agitation against imprisonment for debt—a policy as difficult to administer as its effect was unfortunate. Thus 628 small debtors were committed to jail in Monroe County during 1830 for sums totalling \$6399. Court charges added another 20 per cent to the bill, not counting the expense for the 130 who served an average of three and a half days in jail. Of the list, 53 were held for debts under two dollars, and 148 for debts between two and five dollars; the plaintiffs relented in 181 cases, paying the charges themselves; only 43 were found able and willing to settle their obligations in full.<sup>14</sup> Such a record hardly recommended the system to public favor. The combined agitation of the Mutual Association and several local editors helped to speed the state-wide campaign toward successful legislative action in 1831, curtailing the imprisonment of debtors for sums under fifty dollars.<sup>15</sup>

While the brunt of the recession was borne by the poor, several of the more substantial citizens were also pressed to the wall. Active land speculation in the Genesee had not only inflated values but also saddled many with pledges they could not make good. Numerous lots on the east side at the main falls and at Carthage Landing were sold for taxes in 1830,<sup>16</sup> and although but three in the village suffered that fate, prices tumbled 50 per cent in cases where investors attempted to consolidate their holdings.<sup>17</sup> Foreclosure actions, which had numbered only five

<sup>10</sup> *Minutes and Proceedings of the Mutual Association of the Village of Rochester together with its Constitution and a List of Members of the Shylock Association* (Rochester, 1829).

<sup>11</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 28, 1830; Jan. 11, 1831.

<sup>12</sup> Richard W. Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen: A Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), pp. 85-99; Alice J. G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, *Frances Wright: Free Enquirer* (New York, 1939), pp. 245-270; Fox, *Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York*, pp. 352-359.

<sup>13</sup> See below, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> *Craftsman*, Feb. 9, 1831.

<sup>15</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 22, 27, Mar. 27, Dec. 28, 1830; Jan. 1, 1831; *Rochester Republican*, Feb. 2, 1830; Jan. 31, 1832; *Rochester Observer*, Jan. 29, 1830.

<sup>16</sup> *List of Lands to be Sold in April, 1830, for Arrears of Taxes* (Albany, 1829).

<sup>17</sup> A. Reynolds to Ezra Platt, Rochester, Sept. 6, 1831, Reynolds Papers.

between 1825 and 1828, jumped to thirteen in 1829, continuing to mount until they reached forty-nine in 1833.<sup>18</sup> These were county figures, but most of them involved properties of considerable value in the Rochester vicinity. Even the mightiest were humbled, as J. M. Schermerhorn, younger brother of Abraham the banker, noted in a letter to his wife:

Times have been distressing here in all respects, business is yet hard, losses and failures not uncommon—William Atkinson and Elisha Johnson have failed, the former for \$60,000 or \$80,000 and the latter in consequence of endorsements for him—Many others [losses] are looked for & [some] have failed but they are of no great consequence—My losses have increased a little lately—Economy will have to be the order of the day with us. . . . Peaches are very plenty and very fine here.<sup>19</sup>

In a limited respect Rochester's economic doldrums were self-imposed. Not only had the speculative ardor of the mid-twenties overshot the mark, but the reactions proved equally excessive. One editor commented in the summer of 1832, after the scourge of cholera had been added to the town's misfortunes, "When we pass through the streets of our once flourishing village, we are generally met by men (if we happen to see anybody) with long faces." The chief evil, he felt, was not the disease itself but the "Cholera Sermons" in which the clergy described the disease as a sign of God's wrath sent as a chastisement upon the worldly townsfolk. "Consternation," he added, "seized the inhabitants and . . . hundreds fled."<sup>20</sup> Fires and floods, in part a result of the lack of precaution, further added to the tale of woes. Nevertheless, courage slowly returned and necessary readjustments in rents and lot values were gradually made, so that one visitor in the early thirties could report that "the town is rallying."<sup>21</sup>



That it was a case of gloom and hardship in the midst of plenty, most travelers through the blooming Genesee agreed.<sup>22</sup> An early dis-

<sup>18</sup> "Notices of Pendency of Actions in the 8th District," Monroe County Court House.

<sup>19</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Sept. 22, 1832, Schermerhorn Letters, photostat copies secured by the Roch. Pub. Library through the courtesy of Mrs. Rudolph Stanley-Brown, Wash., D. C. See also Herbert B. Howe, *Jedediah Barber* (New York, 1939), pp. 142-148.

<sup>20</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Aug. 18, Sept. 15, Oct. 6, 1832.

<sup>21</sup> Adam Ferguson, *Practical Notes Made during a Tour of Canada and Parts of the United States in 1831* (Edinburgh, 1833), p. 175. "Rochester has been subject to fluctuations in its progress for some years back, and capitalists have been supposed to retard it by demanding extravagant prices and rents for house-lots and buildings. This, however, must soon cure itself, and already, I am told, the town is rallying."

<sup>22</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 1-117; *Genesee Farmer*, Apr. 21, 1832.

covery that only the imaginary and none of the town's real advantages had been lost brought renewed courage. The commercial facilities were limited, but they might be improved; the flour market was subject to fluctuations, but its profits were frequently quite large; real estate was not the bonanza it had first appeared, but returns were forthcoming as soon as homes or shops were erected; and meanwhile a steady stream of migrants crowded the taverns and provision stores with customers. Only enterprise and credit were needed, and they soon appeared in considerable abundance.

The improvement of its commercial facilities was one of Rochester's constant concerns. Appeals for aid sent to both the state and federal authorities finally prompted the latter to undertake improvements at the Genesee Port in 1829. Two log piers nearly half a mile in length were constructed, providing a 12-foot channel sufficient to accommodate the largest boats on the lake.<sup>23</sup> The state had its hands full keeping the Erie in repair, and in 1833, when flood damage made it necessary to reconstruct a section of the canal east of Rochester, the opportunity was seized to reline the aqueduct. As the stone of the original structure had already begun to disintegrate, the need for a new aqueduct appeared, but that improvement and the desired enlargement of the entire canal were put off for several years.<sup>24</sup>

The one new development in Rochester's transport facilities during the period was the construction of a horse railroad connecting with the lake port at Carthage. Agitation for such a line, started in 1825, procured a suitable charter in 1831, when the \$30,000 capital of the Rochester Canal and Railroad Company was quickly subscribed by prominent east-siders. Elisha Johnson built the short three-mile line commencing at the east end of the aqueduct and following Water and St. Paul streets north to the settlement at the lower falls.<sup>25</sup> The opening of the road on September 27, 1832, afforded a gala occasion. Excited villagers vied with each other for seats at 12½ cents in one of the horse-drawn "pleasure carriages" or crowded into the more numerous open cars built to carry produce. The Rochester Band, packed into one of the open cars, supplied musical accompaniment, but the beauty of the gorge, appearing through the trees from time to time as the cars skirted the edge of the cliff, and the thought that Rochester at last had convenient access to its lake port provided sufficient justification for high spirits. A "sumptuous entertainment prepared in Mathies' customary

<sup>23</sup> *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, May 18, 1830; Apr. 12, 1831; Edwin A. Fisher, "Engineering and Public Works in the City of Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XII, 231.

<sup>24</sup> *Assembly Documents* (1833), vol. II, no. 26, p. 11; no. 36, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Monroe Republican*, Dec. 20, 1825; *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, Feb. 15, Mar. 29, 1831; *Advertiser*, Mar. 30, 1831; *Rock. Republican*, Aug. 21, 1832; *Senate Journal* (1831), pp. 44, 54, 148; *Assembly Journal* (1831), pp. 346, 469.

style at the Clinton House" climaxed the celebration.<sup>26</sup> The line was finally completed the next spring when two inclined plane sections were ready for use, facilitating access to the docks in the gorge.<sup>27</sup>

Several other railroad schemes were already under consideration. The merchants across the river, observing the progress of the Carthage line, began to lay plans for a Rochester and Charlotte Railroad Company, though the protests of east-siders delayed the grant of a charter until 1835, when the scheme was abandoned.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, two more ambitious projects were being formulated, one to connect with Dansville and the Susquehanna valley, and another to head southwest through Batavia to the Allegheny River. When the Dansville and the Tonawanda companies were incorporated in 1832, most of the stock was quickly subscribed in Rochester, but various factors led to the abandonment of the Dansville project, while construction of the Tonawanda line did not commence until the fall of 1834.<sup>29</sup>

More immediate commercial gains were secured by improving several of the old highways and other trade facilities. A new plan increased the efficiency of local road labor, but efforts to secure additional state roads for the area were defeated, although the Buffalo road out of Rochester through Churchville was at last designated as a post road.<sup>30</sup> While agitation for a canal up the Genesee Valley made little headway, small sums were provided for river improvement.<sup>31</sup> A company, organized to build and operate a steamboat on the river above Rochester, launched the *Genesee* in 1834. Unfortunately, as in the case of its predecessor on the river and similar experiments on the canal, the services of the steamer were of brief duration.<sup>32</sup> River boatmen had to be content with improved keelboats, but meanwhile they made certain that the dams and bridges which were constructed from time to time should not obstruct their path.<sup>33</sup>

Commercial prospects on the lake improved somewhat after the modification of the British corn laws in 1831 and the opening of the

<sup>26</sup> *Gem*, Sept. 25, 1832; *Rock. Republican*, Oct. 2, 1832; J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Sept. 27, 1832, Schermerhorn Letters.

<sup>27</sup> *Advertiser*, Feb. 21, 1833.

<sup>28</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1832), pp. 109, 348, 466; *Senate Journal* (1833), pp. 101, 118, 129; *Assembly Journal* (1835), pp. 102, 284, 343, 864.

<sup>29</sup> *Senate Journal* (1832), pp. 51, 102, 129-130, 133; *Assembly Journal* (1832), pp. 41, 51, 68, 113; *Advertiser*, Feb. 19, Mar. 14, 1831; May 1, 1832; Feb. 1, 1833; Sept. 30, 1834; *Inquirer*, Aug. 20, Sept. 17, 1833.

<sup>30</sup> *The Revised Act of the Legislature on Highways and Bridges* (Rochester, 1829); *Assembly Journal* (1831), p. 45; (1833), pp. 234, 256, 807; (1834), pp. 247, 389, 545.

<sup>31</sup> *Senate Documents* (1834), No. 55, pp. 10-11.

<sup>32</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1834), pp. 259, 922, 982, 1017; *Craftsman*, May 29, 1830; *Democrat*, June 30, 1835.

<sup>33</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1834), No. 115.

Welland Canal. Exports from the Genesee reached the high total of \$807,710 in 1833, mostly heading westward to supply the new settlements on the frontier. The weekly calls of four steamboats operating on Lake Ontario at this time provided excellent service, more, apparently, than the trade could long support.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the farms and mills of the West soon captured Rochester's provision market in that region, and Lake Ontario trade, despite the modification of the American tariff after 1832, failed to keep pace with the growing activity on the upper lakes.<sup>35</sup> Canal shipments, on the contrary, continued a steady rise, except in 1832, when the restraints applied by a shipping monopoly produced a slight decrease.<sup>36</sup> Rochester maintained its leading position as a toll collector, second only to Albany, and in 1830, when the Canal Board moved to increase the toll charges, local shippers took the lead in a successful campaign to defeat the proposal.<sup>37</sup> The argument that trade would be diverted to Montreal was persuasive at this time and again in 1833 when it prompted a 25 per cent reduction in tolls on the Erie.<sup>38</sup>

Rochester was chiefly interested in the canal as a flour transport, for that article still comprised the canal's leading eastbound cargo, equaling all others in value in 1833,<sup>39</sup> with Rochester as the major source of these shipments. Local merchants early ventured into the carrying trade. Boatyards appraised at \$25,000 turned out craft to the value of \$80,000 a year by 1833, when investments in boat lines totalled \$74,000, requiring a capital of \$136,000 for their operation.<sup>40</sup>

An attempt to coördinate these various Rochester interests resulted in the organization of a canal boat combine in 1832. The major objectives were to control the flow of western wheat and to prevent cut-throat competition between rival boat lines. Protests were soon heard, both from Eastern millers who could not get adequate supplies of wheat, and from Western grain growers forced to sell at prices fixed by the combine. The farmers of Monroe County were particularly outspoken, complaining that they were forced to accept the prices offered by Rochester millers since forwarders would not carry their wheat to Eastern markets. Wheat prices in Rochester fell 12 to 18 per cent below

<sup>34</sup> George H. Harris, "Early Shipping on the Lower Genesee River: Reminiscences of Captain Hosea Rogers," *R. H. S., Pub.*, IX, 105; *Directory* (1834), p. 1 and adv.

<sup>35</sup> See above notes 2 and 4; Frank W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States* (8th ed.; New York, 1931), pp. 89-108.

<sup>36</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1831), No. 38, p. 11; (1833), No. 36A.

<sup>37</sup> *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Apr. 11, 1830.

<sup>38</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1833), p. 559; *Assembly Doc.* (1833), No. 320.

<sup>39</sup> Timothy Pitkin, *A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States of America* (New Haven, 1835), p. 577.

<sup>40</sup> *Directory* (1834), p. 1.

normal, whether because of the monopoly, or the inflow of western wheat, was not clear. The boat lines, however, lost an estimated \$12,000 in revenue, thus disrupting the combine and defeating the first attempt to stabilize the price of flour and assure Rochester millers a monopoly over the industry.<sup>41</sup>

Despite wide fluctuations in the price of flour<sup>42</sup> and the consequent insecurity of such investments, milling had become the dominant industry, vying with real estate as a basis for social position if not for profits. The wheat resources of the Genesee, already supplemented by the rapidly increasing supplies of Western grain,<sup>43</sup> doubled the flour output of Rochester between 1826 and 1833. The 300,000 barrels shipped in the latter year comprised nearly a third of the flour carried down the Hudson that season, establishing Rochester's preëminence in the state, though larger quantities of flour were still produced in the vicinity of both Baltimore and Richmond.<sup>44</sup> Eighteen mills, equipped with a total of 78 run of stones, assured the town a large cash return. If a major share went to the farmer for his wheat, it was frequently spent in Rochester stores. Four millraces provided a total of 3,400 horsepower to the numerous mills and other establishments, though only a fraction of the potential energy was as yet developed.<sup>45</sup>

There was more than gold in the heavy barrels rolled out of Rochester, for they spread the growing reputation of the Flour City. The attention given by frequent visitors to the new large mills at the upper falls, notably the Hervey Ely mill on the east side and the Beach mill across the river, helped to enhance the fame of Rochester flour.<sup>46</sup> The leading local millwright, Robert M. Dalzell, equipped these huge establishments with machinery developed some years before in Pennsylvania.<sup>47</sup> The

<sup>41</sup> Assembly *Doc.* (1833), No. 320; *Roch. Republican* (extra), Sept. 1832; *Genesee Farmer*, Oct. 6, 1832; *Advertiser*, Jan. 11, Feb. 11, 1833. It is interesting to note Oliver Culver among the protesting farmers, while the millers and forwarders involved in the combine included E. B. Strong, Benjamin Campbell, Hervey Ely, Charles J. Hill, T. H. Rochester, and Jonathan Child among others.

<sup>42</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIII, 290; XV, 520; XXX, 236. Tables of flour prices in New York, Rochester, and Baltimore show fluctuations within each year of \$1 or more, and a decline of from \$8 to \$4 per. bbl. during this period.

<sup>43</sup> *Advertiser*, Feb. 1, 1832. Shipments from the West mounted from 4,000 to 185,000 bushels between 1829 and 1831.

<sup>44</sup> *Directory* (1834), p. 1; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVIII, 223; Charles B. Kuhlmann, *The Development of the Flour-Milling Industry in the United States* (Cambridge, 1929), pp. 43-58. Baltimore was without question the leading flour market, but apparently Rochester milled as much as if not more than was produced by mills within the immediate vicinity of either Baltimore or Richmond.

<sup>45</sup> Samson Scrapbook, No. 57, p. 9, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>46</sup> "Foreign Travel Notes on Rochester and the Genesee Country Before 1840," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 31, 46, 48, 97, 99, 107-108.

<sup>47</sup> Kuhlmann, *Flour-Milling Industry*, pp. 96-98; *Dictionary of American Biography*, V, 48.

grain was carried up in buckets from the canal boats to the top of the four- or five-story mills, whence it descended through the successive stages of cleansing, grinding, cooling, sifting, and packing until the product rolled out in sealed barrels onto the docks without once having been touched by the miller's hand. There was something almost magical about the mills of Rochester—or so it appeared even to travelers from Europe in the early thirties.<sup>48</sup>

A few marked changes developed in the secondary industries of Rochester. The asheries were giving place to more economical uses for the depleted forests;<sup>49</sup> one cotton factory closed down as cheap products began to arrive from the mills of New England, but a carpet factory of considerable size was established in the Globe Building, and a second cotton factory struggled along for a time;<sup>50</sup> two or three sawmills became furniture factories and a carriage factory was established;<sup>51</sup> the tanneries expanded with the increased activity of stock farmers up the valley, while one large slaughterhouse was equipped to handle 75 head a day in 1832.<sup>52</sup> Possibly the largest of several machine shops, producing tools for farm or factory use, was that advertised by Matthew Brown in 1830 as equipped with five fires, two trip hammers, two grindstones, water-power bellows, a power machine shop, and a furnace boasting the greatest blast in the state. By 1833 the metal industry was turning out products valued at \$80,000, including fire engines and, in 1834, grain cutters as well.<sup>53</sup>

The opening of two large and elegant hotels made Rochester a favorite stopping place for the increased number of merchants journeying to and from the expanding West.<sup>54</sup> For a short time the Eagle Tavern at the Four Corners and the Rochester House overlooking the canal at Exchange Street ranked as the best west of Albany, though by the mid-thirties Buffalo was to capture that distinction from Rochester. The renovation of several older taverns and the operation of two as "temperance houses" assured travelers of a wide choice of accommodations.<sup>55</sup> But local merchants, eager to reap profits from the passing throng, protested violently when auctioneers from New York invaded the town,

<sup>48</sup> Watt Stewart, "A Spanish Traveler Visits Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 107-108.

<sup>49</sup> *Gem*, May 4, 1833; *Democrat*, Jan. 11, 1843.

<sup>50</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 18, 1829; *Advertiser*, Mar. 5, 1832; Mar. 19, 1833; *Democrat*, Dec. 9, 1834.

<sup>51</sup> *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Mar. 26, 1830.

<sup>52</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 12, 1832; *Directory* (1834), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 25, 1830; *Genesee Farmer*, Mar. 3, 1832; *Directory* (1834), p. 1; R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 108, 110.

<sup>54</sup> *Gem*, July 2, 1831; *Advertiser*, May 11, 1830.

<sup>55</sup> *Advertiser*, June 11, 28, 1832; *Roch. Republican*, July 3, 1832, Sept. 27, 1836.



slashing prices in order to dispose of their surplus stock quickly.<sup>56</sup> Though efforts to curb the practice met with some success, the reputation of the town for abundant supplies of cheap goods was meanwhile enhanced, and with the increased local output Rochester's function as a provision station for westward migrants was established.<sup>57</sup>



But these varied enterprises were embarrassed by shortages of credit. The Bank of Rochester, declaring an extra dividend of 10 per cent in 1828 (a total of 19 per cent on its capital that year), candidly withdrew its objections to the chartering of a second bank. Many residents complained that one bank could not handle a quarter of the business of the village, forcing resort to banks in Canandaigua or further east.<sup>58</sup> When a charter was finally secured for the Bank of Monroe, the institution, allowed a capital of \$300,000, speedily organized with Abraham Schermerhorn, just back from a business trip to London, as president.<sup>59</sup> New England investors supplied most of the capital, but considerable blocks of stock were subscribed in Canandaigua and other New York towns.<sup>60</sup> The new bank, leasing the choice corner rooms in the new Eagle Hotel at the Four Corners, thus acquired the most favored site in town.

Even the new bank did not long satisfy local demands. Disappointment was expressed when the Bank of the United States located a branch in Buffalo instead of Rochester, though William B. Rochester was named a director of that branch.<sup>61</sup> Applications for a Mechanic's Bank were repeatedly defeated in the legislature by a failure to secure the necessary two-thirds vote,<sup>62</sup> but a charter was granted for a savings bank established by the directors of the two local banks for the convenience of those able to lay by small sums from their earnings.<sup>63</sup> Rochester investors coöperated in establishing banks at Geneseo,

<sup>56</sup> *Advertiser*, June 24, 27, 1828; Feb. 11, 15, 1831; *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 19, Feb. 16, 1830; *Assembly Journal* (1831), pp. 202, 222; *Assembly Doc.* (1831), No. 151; Fred M. Jones, *Middlemen in the Domestic Trade of the United States: 1800-1860* (Urbana, Illinois, 1937), pp. 35-43.

<sup>57</sup> *Gem*, Aug. 13, 1831; *Directory* (1834). Kearney's City Clothing Emporium and Alling's Boot and Shoe Store, both on Exchange St., advertised large stocks of ready-made articles for the speedy accommodation of clients unable to await the services of a tailor or shoemaker. Their products were the cheap and crude articles produced in the East for rough wear as laboring clothes, not the ready-made clothes of a later date.

<sup>58</sup> *Telegraph*, Nov. 17, 1828.

<sup>59</sup> *Advertiser*, July 30, 1828; *Enquirer*, Apr. 28, 1829; *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Oct. 31, 1829; Jan. 5, 1830.

<sup>60</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1833), No. 89, pp. 40-42; *Directory* (1834), pp. 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Sept. 21, 1829; *Roch. Republican*, Oct. 13, 1829.

<sup>62</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1831), p. 232; (1832), pp. 252, 726; (1833), p. 517.

<sup>63</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1831), pp. 226, 630; *Roch. Republican*, Mar. 2, 1830; *Advertiser*, Dec. 11, 1830; Feb. 4, 1831.

Batavia, and Lockport in these years, and some local funds drifted west to Detroit in search of advantages there, though the Flour City's needs were by no means satisfied.<sup>64</sup>

Popular attitudes toward banks were still strongly flavored with politics. The struggle between the Jackson forces and the Second Bank of the United States tended to rally all anti-Jackson groups around that institution, yet the probability that increased advantages would fall to local banks on the dissolution of the Bank of the United States swung the two banks of Rochester (as well as several in New York City and elsewhere) to Jackson's side.<sup>65</sup> Local Jackson forces and the bankers as well supported Van Buren's attempt to secure a sound state banking policy through the safety fund law of 1829.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, all Rochester interests joined in protest against the legislative resistance to appeals for additional banks in the western counties. The Jacksonian *Advertiser* in 1833, after a review of the record of the six banks west of Canandaigua (whose total capitalization of \$1,150,000 had to serve a population of 400,000), concluded that "it is the duty of the Legislature to double the capital of the West at once."

Let us not be told [the editor continued] that this increase of capital will produce over-trading and end in the bankruptcy of the banks. Such an argument may do for many of the older and interior counties of the state where there is little to carry to market and where all things are stationary. . . . Experience has satisfied us that they have no application here. The resources of this country are not half developed. Everything in the west is on the road to improvement. Capital creates business, and here business sustains itself and produces profit to those who carry it on. Look at the fact that in 1820 there was not \$250,000 in these nine counties. In 1829, 30 and 31 it was increased to the sum above mentioned [\$1,150,000]. We were then told by interested bankers at the east that we should be ruined, and bankruptcy of the banks would follow. They are now all in a sound state, have made enormous profits, and we do not believe their whole losses have amounted to \$20,000. . . .

At Buffalo we notice applications for more bank capital. It is needed—let them have it. B. is a great place and is constantly increasing. Her business would soon be doubled if she had capital proportionate to her resources. . . .

In Rochester, too, we understand more capital is to be applied for. It should be cheerfully accorded. Rochester is the Manchester of the West. Give her capital. Her enterprise will ensure a good result.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Advertiser*, June 10, 1830; Nov. 26, 1833.

<sup>65</sup> J. G. Bennett, "Diary of a Journey through New York," Folio 19, MS in New York Public Library; R. C. H. Catterall, *The Second Bank of the United States* (Chicago, 1903), pp. 164-168.

<sup>66</sup> *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Sept. 16, 1829. See also Robert E. Chaddock, *The Safety Fund Banking System in New York: 1829-1866* (National Monetary Commission, Washington, 1910), pp. 259-273.

<sup>67</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 26, 1833. The article continued in part: "We cannot dismiss

Though Rochester's aspiration for additional banks was not gratified for several years, credit stringencies were partly alleviated by the Canal Board's practice of depositing the tolls in local institutions. Thus the deposit of \$280,955 in the two Rochester banks in 1832 added considerably to the funds available for circulation and contributed to bank profits.<sup>68</sup> Dividends of 10 per cent were normal during these years despite the uncertainty in many places concerning Rochester's future prospects.<sup>69</sup> Deflation in real estate, or rather in lot speculation, was not matched in other fields. The loans and discounts of the Bank of Monroe reached \$713,946 in 1832, and when the New York Life Insurance Company reported its loans in the area to be well above par, the company's president observed that "the advancing improvement of the country, and its prosperity, must add daily to that security."<sup>70</sup>

The healthy character of Rochester's affairs became apparent as the gloom of the early thirties disappeared. A desire for more accurate information concerning the town's industrial activity caused the Franklin Institute to appoint a Committee on Manufactures late in 1828,<sup>71</sup> and statistical summaries of at least suggestive value appeared from time to time. At the close of 1831 the investment in local manufacturing enterprises was placed at \$511,000 and their product for the year at \$1,875,000.<sup>72</sup> Two years later these figures had increased to \$609,143 and \$2,105,239 respectively. Postal receipts practically doubled between 1826 and 1834; private dwellings numbered 1,300 at the latter date, representing a gain in size, stability, and probably in numbers, over the 1,474 houses and shops of 1827.<sup>73</sup> Those individuals who had put their funds into productive enterprises, such as Abelard Reynolds with his Arcade, were now able to raise additional funds from Eastern in-

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this subject without expressing our regret at the bad consequences which have attended the sparing, reluctant manner in which the legislature has hitherto chartered capital. What has been the effect? The capital of the state has presented a scene of management to procure these charters, & little else concerning the great interests of the state could obtain consideration. The stock chartered has been a bone of contention among our citizens whose avarice has been tempted by high premiums. Charter a sufficient amount to absorb the surplus capital, & it sinks to par value where it ought to be, & the contention ceases. Legislative business would move on with its usual purity."

<sup>68</sup> Assembly *Doc.* (1833), No. 4, p. 9; (1834), No. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Assembly *Doc.* (1833), No. 89, p. 72.

<sup>70</sup> Assembly *Doc.* (1833), No. 69, *passim*, No. 209, pp. 18, 19, 28.

<sup>71</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 19, 1828; Board of Manufacturers of Rochester, "Secretary's Account," Jan. 29, 1830, Charles Perkins Papers, MSS, Roch. Pub. Library. Ten of the twelve members paid \$1.66 each to meet the bill for a six-month advertisement in the *New York Gazette* inviting correspondence on the business prospects of Rochester.

<sup>72</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Dec. 27, 1831; Nov. 6, 1832.

<sup>73</sup> *Directory* (1834), p. 2. No figure for private dwellings is available for 1827.

vestors for the purchase of undeveloped lots at depreciated values.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the appearance of the business quarter improved rapidly as the old heavy fronts were torn out and "rebuilt in the light and tasteful manner of the city."<sup>75</sup> Rochester was rapidly assuming the character of the Flour City.

#### THE HESITANT ASSUMPTION OF URBAN RESPONSIBILITIES

The second important task of the period was to develop agencies to cope with the growing civic problems. Though reluctance to assume urban status was dwindling, economic, political, and religious distractions delayed the acquisition of a city charter until 1834, occasioning many temporary adjustments of the town's functions. The halting and uncertain management of its affairs contributed to the confusion of Rochester's formative years, measurably retarding its growth; nevertheless, civic and political independence was achieved by the mid-thirties.

Agitation for a city charter, first defeated in 1826, revived late in 1828 to continue unabated until finally successful six years later.<sup>76</sup> That it was not a presumptuous desire was evident from a comparison with other cities, for the Genesee mill town had in 1827 passed the 8000 figure at which Pittsburgh and Cincinnati gained cityhood in 1816 and 1817 respectively, while many others attained that status with smaller numbers. The New York legislature, however, had but recently defeated Brooklyn's application, despite its larger size,<sup>77</sup> and there was little disposition to grant Rochester the favor while its own citizens were divided on the matter. A public meeting strongly indorsed the application in 1829, but the protests of the opposition, who not only cherished the traditions of the New England town, but also feared larger taxes, caused the legislature to defer action.<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile the trustees, confronted with numerous and insistent problems, were forced to attack them with the limited powers at hand. The streets continued to present the most serious difficulties. Sidewalks were ordered extended from time to time; assessments provided for new sewers; and the draft of citizens for labor on the streets continued. Typical specifications called for sewers eighteen inches square with stone

<sup>74</sup> Reynolds Papers for 1831 and 1832. It was at this period that Abelard Reynolds extended his holdings on Corn Hill and other promising sections of Rochester's outskirts.

<sup>75</sup> *Advertiser*, May 11, 1830.

<sup>76</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 16, 1828; Feb. 28, 1829; *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Nov. 19, 1829; Mar. 25, 1830.

<sup>77</sup> Ralph F. Weld, *Brooklyn Village: 1816-1834* (New York, 1938), pp. 39-53.

<sup>78</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Mar. 3, Nov. 17, Dec. 22, 1829; *Assembly Journal* (1832), pp. 331, 337; John F. Sly, *Town Government in Massachusetts* (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 104-124.



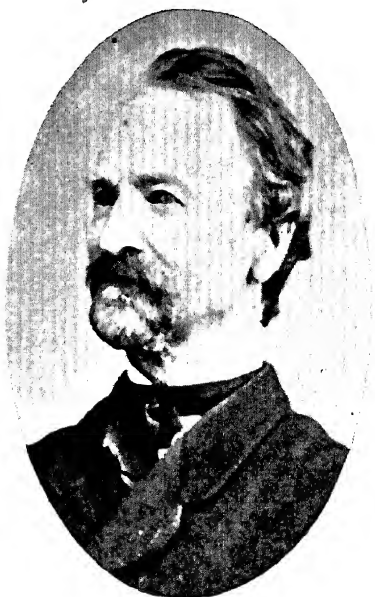
IX. 1. JONATHAN CHILD



IX. 2. REVEREND JOSEPH PENNEY



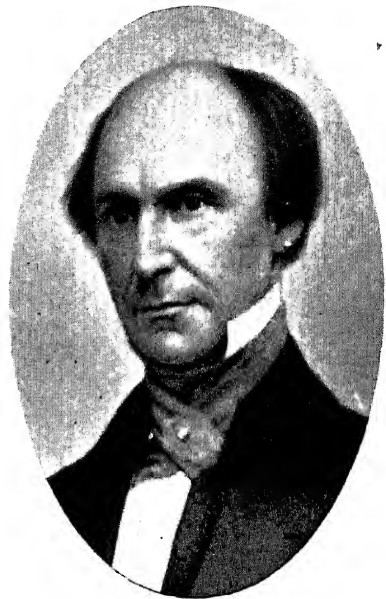
IX. 3. EVERARD PECK



IX. 4. HENRY O'REILLY



X. 1. DR. CHESTER DEWEY



X. 2. JUDGE SAMUEL LEE SELDEN



X. 3. LEWIS H. MORGAN



X. 4. FREDERICK DOUGLASS

sides and the bottom and top of planks; the depth of course depended upon the lay of the land, for a slight pitch was necessary to insure drainage.<sup>79</sup> Nearly two miles of such sewers and three miles of sidewalks were constructed by 1834, when a few blocks of macadam paving appeared around the central Four Corners.<sup>80</sup>

The emergence of an urban center was suggested by several additional improvements. The first action numbering the houses on the four principal streets occurred in December, 1829;<sup>81</sup> a renewed drive to compel lot holders to sweep the streets in front of their properties once each week started that year;<sup>82</sup> and in November, 1830, the first street lamps appeared. The bridge lamps of an earlier day had probably vanished, as seven lamps were now ordered for the various bridges, together with eight others to be erected at the two major intersections east and west of the river. Though the number of these oil lamps doubled a year later, the appropriation for their maintenance was cut off in the spring of 1833 when a desire for economy gained sway.<sup>83</sup>

A problem which required renewed attention was that of increasing and safeguarding the town's water supply. Scattered public and private wells comprised the chief source of drinking water, and the trustees were frequently called upon to install a pump in a newly dug well or to drain and clean one that had become foul.<sup>84</sup> The opening of four mineral springs within the limits raised the community's hopes until the water proved better suited for use in public bath houses than for drinking purposes.<sup>85</sup> As household needs increased, Elisha Johnson, Rochester's outstanding engineer, drafted a plan for supplying the community with fresh water. After some hesitation, application was made to the legislature in 1834 for authority to organize a water company.<sup>86</sup> Such power was indeed granted under the city charter of that year, but meanwhile renewed petitions for public wells received favor.<sup>87</sup>

A more insistant aspect of the problem was the lack of adequate water resources for the fire fighters. The small reservoirs frequently constructed at strategic corners consisted of wooden hogsheads buried where rain water would keep them reasonably filled, or open basins filled by

<sup>79</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 14, 1831.

<sup>80</sup> Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. \*379-\*380.

<sup>81</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 8, 1829.

<sup>82</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 19, 1829. The original ordinance passed on Dec. 10, 1828, had of course not been enforced during the winter. *Advertiser*, May 17, 1832.

<sup>83</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Nov. 16, 1830; Nov. 22, 1831; Apr. 30, 1833.

<sup>84</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 26, June 16, Sept. 15, 29, 1829; Feb. 9, 1830; Aug. 9, 16, 1831.

<sup>85</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Sept. 4, 1832; *Enquirer*, May 25, 1830.

<sup>86</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 3, 1832; *Assembly Journal* (1834), p. 53.

<sup>87</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 4, 1833.

"aqueducts" of hollow logs leading from a raceway or some other abundant water supply.<sup>88</sup> Although even such modest reservoirs supplied a fairly satisfactory makeshift in summertime, they were of little use during winter months or dry seasons. Only good fortune saved the town from a serious conflagration in December, 1831, when several wooden buildings just north of the Mansion House were destroyed. As the fire companies exhausted the available water supply before the flames approached the old tavern, only a shift in wind saved that favorite community center and probably the central part of town as well.<sup>89</sup>

No one denied that the fire hazard was the major community concern. The bucket brigade was not abandoned until 1829, when the citizens, relieved of the necessity for keeping fire buckets, assessed themselves to purchase a new engine in Auburn. Three years later Rochester had its own manufacturer of fire engines, and by 1834 the town was equipped with six engines and one ladder company.<sup>90</sup> Lively conflicts frequently occurred when one company crossed the path of another as they hauled their engines to the scene of a fire.<sup>91</sup> Their best efforts usually sufficed only to check the spread of the blaze.

Organized fire prevention started when each ward appointed five wardens, empowered to inspect all structures and to report faulty flues or other dangerous conditions.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the seven fires of 1831 were followed by sixteen in 1832.<sup>93</sup> Fines against church sextons who failed to ring their bells on the outbreak of a fire were replaced in 1833 by rewards for those first to sound the alarm.<sup>94</sup> But all agreed that the fire hazard would never be brought under control until an adequate supply of water was made available in all parts of town. It was therefore somewhat of a surprise when the greatest fire of Rochester's short history broke out on the night of January 25, 1834, directly over the river. All the wooden buildings that had crept out along the north side of the bridge went up in flames, with a property loss of nearly \$100,000.<sup>95</sup>

Included in that holocaust was the bridge market which had occupied much of the trustees' time and thought since its erection five years

<sup>88</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 30, 1829, Jan. 10, May 25, June 30, 1830; Nov. 27, 1832.

<sup>89</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Dec. 20, 1831.

<sup>90</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 7, Aug. 11, 1829; Oct. 5, 1830; Nov. 29, 1832; Jan. 19, June 4, 1833; *Advertiser*, Dec. 20, 1831.

<sup>91</sup> *Advertiser*, June 6, 1832.

<sup>92</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 12, Dec. 20, 1831.

<sup>93</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 17, 1832; *Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1833. The property destroyed in 1831 was estimated at \$43,750 and that of 1832 at only \$13,377. Insurance covered over two-thirds of these losses.

<sup>94</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 2, 10, 1833.

<sup>95</sup> *Gem*, Feb. 1, 1834; "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 27, 1834.



before. The rentals from its numerous stalls had early promised a handsome return on the investment, spurring the village to buy up the market stock. When the last installment was paid off in 1830, the town looked forward to a revenue of approximately \$1,000 a year.<sup>96</sup> Petitions for a second market at the point where Buffalo Street crossed the canal were denied, though a supplementary market equipped with two large butcher stalls was provided in Frankfort.<sup>97</sup> With the sale of fresh fish or meat in other parts of town rigidly prohibited, throngs of eager customers made the bridge market a community asset. Plans were drawn for a new market shortly after the fire, but disagreement over its location postponed construction; in the meantime several of the market men erected temporary stalls on the old bridge site.<sup>98</sup>

The trustees took early action to provide hay scales in front of the Red Mill where the great loads brought in from surrounding farms could be weighed and quickly disposed of without obstructing the streets.<sup>99</sup> Official wood measurers and leather inspectors were appointed to safeguard these thriving activities—a regulation which was especially useful in the case of the wood dealers whose daily loads supplied practically all the available fuel.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, as the need for economy was balanced against the greater fire hazards of the winter months, the town watch was reorganized each November and discontinued in March. A captain of the watch, appointed to assure efficiency, kept his five assistants on duty throughout the night only on New Year's eve.<sup>101</sup> When the "watch room" in the Court House was required for other uses in 1833, the watch fees were advanced from \$8 a month to fifty cents a night to enable the men to find their own beds.<sup>102</sup>

The old battle over licensing regulations continued, with those favoring prohibitive fees gradually gaining the upper hand. After a public debate of the issue in 1829, grocery licenses, which had ranged between \$5 and \$12 the year before, increased to between \$12 and \$25. During the great revival of 1831 the fee again advanced to \$30, and to \$40 a year later when it was provided that only applicants of good character should be given licenses.<sup>103</sup> Despite the anomalous admission that good

<sup>96</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Mar. 30, Apr. 30, 1830.

<sup>97</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 30, 1828; Feb. 3, Mar. 27, May 26, 1829.

<sup>98</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," July 7, 1829; Apr. 30, 1830; Jan. 27, Feb. 11, Mar. 19, 1834.

<sup>99</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 30, July 7, 1829; Mar. 1, 1831.

<sup>100</sup> Assembly *Doc.* (1832), No. 23; (1833), No. 91; *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 31, 1832.

<sup>101</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Nov. 15, 1831; Nov. 27, 1832; Mar. 26, Nov. 19, Dec. 31, 1833.

<sup>102</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Dec. 2, 1833.

<sup>103</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," May 6, 12, 1829; May 6, 1830, May 5, 7, 1831, May 10, 15, 1832.

men might engage in the sale of liquor, the reform represented a victory for the forces of Zion, evident in the smaller number of licensed dealers.<sup>104</sup> In similar fashion license restrictions decreased the number of theatrical performances and excluded gambling devices, though the town remained open to animal shows and like exhibits.<sup>105</sup>

The most serious problem that confronted the community was the cholera epidemic of 1832. Concern began to mount in June when news arrived that the plague had reached Montreal. The trustees, reluctant to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, rejected an appeal by local clergymen for a day of public fasting to ward off divine wrath;<sup>106</sup> instead the defunct board of health was reorganized and Dr. Colman sent to Montreal to study the character and treatment of the disease. While there, he conferred with Canadian physicians and joined a New York delegation in case observation, but Dr. Colman's report that the contagious character of the malady was overemphasized failed to dispel fears at Rochester.<sup>107</sup> Numerous sanitary precautions were hastily taken and incoming lake vessels inspected. It was over the canal from the East, however, that Rochester's first cholera victim arrived early that July.<sup>108</sup>

Soon the ravages of the dread plague spread terror and death through the community, sorely trying the spirits of the most courageous. Approximately one thousand fled the town, and many who had no place to go kept within doors, so that normal village functions were neglected. Some papers suspended publication, while the editor of the *Advertiser*, who had bravely carried on, was sorrowfully compelled to bury his own wife, an early victim of the scourge.<sup>109</sup> Neighboring bath resorts seized the occasion to advertise the healthful character of their establishments.<sup>110</sup> In the general exodus two members of the board of health tendered their resignations. During the first month following the outbreak fifty-seven deaths were ascribed to cholera and by the middle of July the toll reached eleven in one day.<sup>111</sup>

Fortunately, several heroic leaders emerged, causing the spirits of

<sup>104</sup> *Observer*, May 29, 1829; Ebenezer Griffin, *An Address Delivered at Rochester before the Monroe County Temperance Society at their Annual Meeting*, Jan. 4, 1831 (Rochester, 1831), p. 9. The 99 licenses of 1828 were reduced to 60 in 1830,

<sup>105</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," *passim*.

<sup>106</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 20, 1832.

<sup>107</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," June 25, 26, 1832; Dr. Anson Colman to Dr. Matthew Brown, Montreal, June 27, 1832, Colman Letters, Univ. Rochester; *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 7, 1832.

<sup>108</sup> *Advertiser*, June 19, 21, 26, 1832; *Observer*, June 20, 1832; *Liberal Advocate*, July 14, 1832.

<sup>109</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 7, 1832; *Liberal Advocate*, July 26, 1832.

<sup>110</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 14, Sept. 4, 1832.

<sup>111</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 21, 1832; July 12 to Aug. 12—57 deaths; 11 died on Aug. 15.

the town to rally. Colonel Ashbel W. Riley, appointed to fill a vacancy on the board, assumed personal responsibility for hunting out new victims. When efforts to save them failed, the fearless Colonel placed the dead in coffins and buried the majority himself. Constable Simmons assumed charge of an improvised hospital in an old cooper shop where homeless patients were given shelter and the scant treatment available.<sup>112</sup> The Rochester board of health courageously took charge of a boatload of immigrants which had lost five out of fifty-six passengers before reaching the village, but when fourteen more died at the hospital, indignation was expressed against the health authorities of eastern towns who had refused to permit the boat to stop within their territories. The practice of New York and Albany philanthropists who provided immigrants free but crowded passage on canal boats bound for the West was roundly condemned as contributing to the spread of the disease.<sup>113</sup>

Repeated efforts were made to dispel the fear and consternation which cast a blight over the community. The pious assumption that only the dissipated would suffer soon proved false as victims appeared among the most respectable,<sup>114</sup> but the attempt to give reassurance by showing that the deaths of July, 1831, had slightly exceeded those of the same month in 1832,<sup>115</sup> lost its effect when the number of daily fatalities mounted in August. Small consolation was afforded by reports of the plague's ravages in other cities, though news that the situation was improving in Montreal came as a good omen for the early relief of Rochester. Indeed, after the peak of eleven deaths on August 15th, the number of new cases gradually declined, and the townsfolk began to breathe more easily early in September when the last fatality was reported.<sup>116</sup> A total of 118 victims and approximately 400 cases had been recorded in the village, but the board of health took the optimistic view that only one out of thirty had been attacked while less than a fourth of these had died, many of them transients, so that the community could be justly thankful that most of its 12,000 citizens remained in good health.<sup>117</sup>

The town rallied quickly from its affliction, determined to meet future hazards with greater confidence. When an epidemic of smallpox threatened late that year, the board of health took prompt measures to provide free vaccination.<sup>118</sup> And the next spring when a general state of

<sup>112</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Sept. 22, 1832.

<sup>113</sup> *Roch. Republican*, July 31, 1832.

<sup>114</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 21, 1832; W[illiam] Pitkin to Dr. Powell Morgan, Rochester, Aug. 16, 1832, MS, Collected Letters, R. P. L.

<sup>115</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 14, 1832.

<sup>116</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Sept. 11, 1832; *Gem*, Sept. 15, 1832.

<sup>117</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Sept. 11, 18, 1832.

<sup>118</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Nov. 27, 1832; *Advertiser*, Dec. 31, 1832.

good health was reported, the villagers paused to honor those who had rendered faithful service during the emergency.<sup>119</sup>

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While the trustees generally found themselves overburdened, several important functions were beyond their control. The division of responsibility with the county in respect to poor relief and the construction or repair of bridges proved a source of inefficiency and delay.<sup>120</sup> More serious was the lack of effective control over the district schools. Rochester likewise felt the need for improved local courts<sup>121</sup> and for a new jail, but these were the province of the county. Indeed, the village was still but a minor portion—not as yet even an autonomous subdivision—of the county which numbered 49,862 inhabitants in 1830, only a fifth of them in Rochester.

The growing complexity of the county's affairs appeared in the size of its expenditures as well as in their character. Special assessments for roads and bridges were debated at practically every meeting of the supervisors. The county taxes, which amounted to \$17,490 for contingent expenses in 1829, advanced to \$21,500 by 1833, without including numerous special assessments and other items, but the county's real property valuation rose even more rapidly, exceeding \$8,000,000 by 1835.<sup>122</sup>

Problems of poor relief were aggravated by the combined effects of the recession, the ravages of cholera, and the increasing number of destitute immigrants. As the supervisors refused to abolish the vague distinction between town and county poor, duplication of effort resulted. Thus 390 persons received county relief within Gates and Brighton townships during the fiscal year 1832–1833 when 462 were assisted directly by these townships, while 168 from the same area were sheltered for a time in the county poorhouse erected at Brighton in 1826. The great majority of "cases" were attributed to intemperance, and approximately one third were of foreign birth. Admission to the poorhouse required a health certificate, and for this and other reasons Monroe County had the lowest per capita poorhouse admissions in the state.<sup>123</sup> Approximately a tenth were children, some of them cholera orphans, others abandoned by parents migrating westward. An apparent lack of enterprise among the immigrants, many of whom had been

<sup>119</sup> *Gem*, May 4, 1833.

<sup>120</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 15, 1833.

<sup>121</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1831), pp. 175, 237; (1832), pp. 251, 356; (1833), pp. 150, 172, 972–973.

<sup>122</sup> *Proceedings of Board of Supervisors* (1821–1849), pp. 76, 110, 115, 142; *Rock. Republican*, Oct. 20, 1829.

<sup>123</sup> Samuel Chipman, *Report of an Examination of the Poor Houses, Jails, etc. in the State of New York* (Albany, 1834), pp. 36–38; *Inquirer*, July 31, 1832; *Assembly Doc.*, (1831), No. 66E.

parish poor in their home countries across the Atlantic, prompted the adoption of a labor stint on the 47-acre poor farm. Whether or not inmates were thus spurred to seek employment, the farm produce helped to keep the weekly per capita budget down to 59 cents.<sup>124</sup>

Possibly the most urgent problem before the supervisors was the construction of a new jail. Though permission to raise \$5,000 for that purpose had been secured from the legislature in 1828, the county treasurer died insolvent shortly after the funds were collected, and his bondsmen escaped payment. A grand jury which examined the old jail again in 1830 condemned the arrangement that crowded debtors, detention cases, and felons together around one narrow and poorly heated corridor.<sup>125</sup> When authority to raise another \$5,000 was granted, a site was chosen on the southern tip of the island formed by the river and the Rochester and Montgomery race. A stone wall, constructed by the convicts along the southern edge of the island, afforded protection from floods, considerably benefitting the town as well, but the funds proving insufficient, a second assessment was required to finish the \$12,000 jail in 1833.<sup>126</sup> Built on the cell-block pattern of Auburn prison, the new jail, a model in its day, attracted favorable comment from numerous visitors. Its facilities were soon to be overtaxed, however, and even before the building was finished the inmates, numbering 279 in 1832-1833, began to arrive.<sup>127</sup>

The civic function which most urgently called for responsible village supervision was that performed by the scattered district schools. County inspectors with scant authority had been appointed, but the school districts within the village limits were seriously baffled by the situation, for the problems in Rochester differed from those of the outlying townships. Though Gates and Brighton together numbered 4085 children between 5 and 16 years of age in 1834, only 2490 of them attended public school during the year. Elsewhere in the county the attendance exceeded the number of children, a statistical result made possible by the enrollment of transients, many of whom were not present when the school census was taken. The still greater number of transients in Rochester's shifting population must have made the failure of the town schools even more serious than the figures revealed.<sup>128</sup> Only a central school authority could hope to cope with the problem, and that waited upon the grant of a city charter.

Though the situation was alleviated by numerous private schools,

<sup>124</sup> Assembly Doc. (1831), No. 66E; (1833), No. 38; *Advertiser*, Oct. 12, 1832; *Inquirer*, Oct. 22, 1833; Assembly Doc. (1834), No. 73, p. 23.

<sup>125</sup> *Craftsman*, Jan. 5, 1830; Assembly Doc. (1831), No. 18.

<sup>126</sup> Assembly Doc. (1832), No. 13.

<sup>127</sup> Chipman, p. 37.

<sup>128</sup> "Annual Report of the Commissioners of Common Schools," Assembly Doc. (1834), No. 9A.

the absence of regulation and the fleeting character of these ventures decreased their usefulness. The Female Charitable Society's school was more stable, and two additional charity schools under church auspices supplemented the work of the Sabbath schools, yet many children escaped formal instruction.<sup>129</sup> In order to make up for inadequate schooling among the older boys, an Institute for Practical Education was established where poor lads could earn their support in the intervals between classes.<sup>130</sup> The Rochester Institute, in line with a reform popular at the time, functioned for nearly two years with success until a sudden drop in the price of the barrels, which the boys turned out in the adjoining cooperage, deprived the school of its major income, bringing the experiment to an untimely end.<sup>131</sup>

The most forthright attempt to provide a school adapted to the needs of the growing town was made by the trustees of Brighton Districts 4 and 14 under the special charter granted by the legislature to the Rochester High School in 1827. Unfortunately the construction cost exceeded the fund available by \$3000, and as popular opposition forestalled an additional tax, the trustees, after three fairly successful years, determined to lease the building.<sup>132</sup> When the Reverend Gilbert Morgan reopened the school as the Rochester Seminary in 1832, a staff of nine teachers attracted over 300 scholars and provided Rochester with one of the best schools in western New York. Most of its 350 students in 1833 were enrolled free of charge from the two Brighton districts in lieu of rent, but 106 were graded in the higher branches or special classes where they paid fees totalling \$1681 for the year. Though the Regents contributed \$318.46, the largest grant made to any academy in the state, the combined funds failed to cover the salary budget. Difficult times lay ahead.<sup>133</sup>



While demands for a city charter came from many sources, numerous political complications delayed action. As the center of Antimasonry,

<sup>129</sup> *Observer*, Jan. 9, 1830; Blake McKelvey, "On the Educational Frontier," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVI, 30-34.

<sup>130</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1832), pp. 68, 279, 532; *Assembly Doc.* (1832), No. 2, 13. See also Gilbert H. Barnes and D. L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké* (New York, 1934), pp. 17n, 51n, 56-57, 70.

<sup>131</sup> *Roch. Republican*, July 26, Sept. 6, 1831; *Advertiser*, Nov. 17, 18, 1831; *Inquirer*, Apr. 3, May 8, 1832.

<sup>132</sup> *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Feb. 2, 4, 1830; *Assembly Journal* (1831), pp. 47, 100, 252; *Advertiser*, May 3, Sept. 4, 1832.

<sup>133</sup> "Annual Report of the Regents," *Senate Doc.* (1833), No. 70; *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Rochester Seminary* (Rochester, 1833); W. J. Gifford, *History of the Development of the N. Y. State High School System*, Ann. Report of N. Y. Education Dept. for 1919 (Albany, 1922), pp. 101-103; Mary B. A. King, *Looking Backward* (New York, 1870), pp. 127-128.

Rochester enjoyed no special favors from the Regency-controlled legislature, and although that body stood ready in 1832 to grant a city charter similar to those of Buffalo and Utica, it would not agree with Rochester's carefully laid plans to safeguard local autonomy. Hence the charter was postponed another two years.

The political balance in Rochester remained so close in the early thirties that every measure was carefully examined for partisan implications. John C. Spencer, a brilliant Canandaigua attorney, was invited to draft a charter for Rochester in the hope that an outsider with moderate National Republican leanings would be unaffected by local rivalries. But soon after the charter was submitted early in 1832 complications began to appear. As Spencer had by this time joined the Antimasonic party, his draft was suspect as far as the two Jacksonian trustees were concerned. One veteran trustee primarily interested in an adequate charter, Dr. Matthew Brown, Antimason though he was, sought to incorporate necessary Democratic amendments in order to speed the charter's adoption. The same sentiment, evident at a public meeting, finally sent the slightly modified Spencer draft to Albany, accompanied, however, with petitions both supporting and opposing its passage.<sup>134</sup>

Political considerations found renewed expression in the legislative debate. Though the general practice of the day called for a recorder appointed by the governor and justices chosen by the aldermen, the proposed charter provided for the local election of all officers. As the recorder normally sat with the aldermen, the Regency jealously guarded its indirect vote in the Rochester council by reinserting the customary provision. The Antimasonic minority, unable to block this revision, did force a compromise which sheared the recorder of influence in the council. Many opposed the charter because of the increased taxing authority conferred on the council, and accordingly the original draft, fixing \$8000 as the maximum annual tax, was revised, reducing the general maximum to \$5000, with additions for specified purposes. Buffalo and Utica, each with smaller populations, permitted the \$8000 maximum, but Rochester felt relieved to hear of its charter restraints. Although these modifications were accepted by the opposing factions, a deadlock occurred over the selection of local justices, defeating the charter at the last moment.<sup>135</sup>

Rochester was not prepared for this blow. Arrangements for local

<sup>134</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 17, 31, Feb. 7, 14, 15, 21, 1832; *Advertiser*, Feb. 3, Mar. 16, 1832; "John C. Spencer," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVII, 449-450.

<sup>135</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1832), pp. 331, 337, 414, 724, 829; *Senate Journal* (1832), pp. 331, 354, 362, 373, 396; *Roch. Republican*, Apr. 10, 1832; *Advertiser*, Apr. 26, 27, 30, 1832.

elections had already been made by the trustees, a map of the expected city tract was completed, and the county assessors were calculating town schedules which exempted Rochester property from Brighton and Gates.<sup>136</sup> Since Buffalo had gained a charter without difficulty, the locally dominant Antimasons were held responsible for obstructing Rochester's aspirations. The reaction did not counterbalance other influences that November, but the next May and again in November the Antimasons lost all contests in Rochester.<sup>137</sup> Despite renewed application for a slightly modified charter, disagreement over the selection of justices again blocked passage.<sup>138</sup> This time the Antimasons sought to make political capital out of the Regency's refusal to allow the "filthy mechanics" of Rochester to elect their justices;<sup>139</sup> many citizens, however, impatient for the greater services of a city government, suspected the obstructionists of being chiefly concerned to protect their properties from the burden of city taxes.

As the demand for a charter could no longer be denied, a sufficient number of votes was secured in April, 1834, to pass the bill almost as originally submitted two years before. Not only were the justices to be appointed, but the recorder had his customary powers, and an \$8000 tax limit was reinserted.<sup>140</sup> Under the new definition of Rochester's limits 4,819 acres were included within the bounds, practically four times the former village area.<sup>141</sup> Though few citizens were added by this annexation, since undeveloped subdivisions comprised the outlying portions of the city tract, the population had now reached 12,252.<sup>142</sup>

The organization of the first city government brought the local political struggle to a head. With popular interest in the Morgan controversy flagging, the Antimasons sought a new grievance, as their fight over the charter illustrated. Elsewhere in the state close ties were developing between this faction and the National Republicans or Clay supporters, while in Rochester they were drawn together by the temperance issue as well as by a common desire to see the new taxing power placed in moderate hands. An anti-Jackson or Whig ticket was accordingly named to oppose the "Mortgage Party [who] are preparing for a desperate conflict." "Whiskey," one editor declared, "runs

<sup>136</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Apr. 26, 1832, Oct. 29, 1833; *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors* (1821-1849), pp. 91, 99.

<sup>137</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 23, 1832; May 7, 1833; *Inquirer*, Nov. 12, 1833.

<sup>138</sup> "Doings of the Trustees," Jan. 9, Feb. 22, 1833; *Senate Journal* (1833), pp. 91, 118, 175, 180, 193, 198, 265, 308, 326.

<sup>139</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 27, 1834.

<sup>140</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1834), pp. 41, 77, 166, 816; *Senate Journal* (1834), pp. 241-242, 321.

<sup>141</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 28, 1830; *Roch. Republican*, Nov. 6, 1832; W. Earl Weller, "The Expanding Boundaries of Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XIV, 175-178.

<sup>142</sup> *Directory* (1834), p. 5. See the Elisha Johnson map included in the directory.



like water in Dublin [the Irish quarter]. We intend to be ready for them." <sup>143</sup>

The Whigs proved successful, electing a full slate of aldermen, who proceeded to name Jonathan Child, son-in-law of Colonel Rochester, first mayor. At a celebration held on Brown's Island overlooking the falls,<sup>144</sup> the "Lord Mayor" and old Judge Strong, their bitter differences of the previous decade forgotten, delivered speeches, and many cold hams were consumed, together with much hot coffee, as one opposition paper scornfully noted. The new aldermen should recollect, remarked the *Liberal Advocate*, "that times have changed, and that [the] *somber* cloud that overshadowed this region during the visitations of Finney and Burchard is nearly dissipated." But the same editor was soon forced to report that "the work of *regeneration* has commenced—a war of extermination against *Barber poles* and *tavern signs*." <sup>145</sup>

#### RELIGIOUS REVIVALS AND REPERCUSSIONS

The city of 1834 with its newly acquired charter, its 1300 houses scattered out over a wide area, its mill wheels rumbling again with renewed optimism, reflected still another influence—the stirring religious revivals of the early thirties. It was not without point that a Scottish visitor <sup>146</sup> of 1831 described Rochester as the "perfect example of progress from stumps to steeples," for that was the era's outstanding cycle of achievement. Fourteen steeples called attention to some elegant structures by 1834, but it was the new dynamic spirit rather than the growth of institutional equipment that characterized and animated the community during the early thirties.

Rochester's position as the outstanding community of the Northwest during the late twenties attracted several worthy clerics. Joseph Penney was respected for his learning; Henry J. Whitehouse at St. Luke's was loved for his modest piety, while the impassioned sermons of Joel Parker were making Third Presbyterian the focal center of stirring events. Oliver C. Comstock, a former congressman, provided the Baptist Church and the Sunday School Union with able leadership, while Glezen Fillmore, brother of the only Antimason to reach the White House, was building up the Methodist congregation to fill the largest church in town.<sup>147</sup> Yet it was from the fervid response of lay members that the revival movement developed, and no doubt the gloomy aftermath of

<sup>143</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 29, 1834.

<sup>144</sup> *Democrat*, June 10, 14, 1834.

<sup>145</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, June 14, 21, 1834.

<sup>146</sup> Adam Ferguson, *Tour of Canada and . . . the United States*, p. 173.

<sup>147</sup> "Joel Parker," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIV, 231; "Henry J. Whitehouse," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, XI, 33; "Oliver Comstock," *Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress* (Washington, 1928), p. 837.

Rochester's boom greatly contributed to the emotional outburst. For a time the movement seemed to be an advanced phase of the politico-journalistic furor of 1828 and 1829, but its energies, turning toward ideological rather than partisan reforms, produced more far-reaching social than political effects.

Curiously enough, it was the foolhardy leap of Sam Patch which touched off the emotional powder keg in Rochester. News of the spread of revivals in the East and of a "refreshing shower" at Lima up the valley had brought joy to local zealots and, together with the powerful preaching of Joel Parker, had stirred enthusiasm for Bible distribution, temperance, and Sabbath reform. Annual "concerts of prayer" were held in the Court House Square,<sup>148</sup> yet mirthful activities retained their hold in Rochester until the Sunday following Patch's fatal leap, when Elder Josiah Bissell admonished the members of the Third Presbyterian Sunday School for taking part in the tragedy. An awful feeling descended upon his hearers as he warned that all who by their attendance had encouraged the jumper would be held accountable at the Last Judgment.<sup>149</sup> With the misfortunes besetting the Masonic brethren for their thoughtless participation in secret and evil associations fresh in mind, dire punishments were to be expected for this new offense. It did not require an active imagination to connect the unaccountable languor in Rochester's economic affairs with divine displeasure.

Fired with almost fanatical convictions, Elder Bissell emerged as the dominant personality in the community. Not only was he a patron of the *Observer*, that unrivalled mouthpiece of local religious zealots, but he was one of the moving spirits in the Antimasonic agitation, as well as the founder and chief backer of the six-day stage company and the six-day packet line. The chief pillar in the Third Presbyterian Church and the most active member of local Bible and tract societies, Bissell's influence proved far-reaching.<sup>150</sup> Early and large investments in east-side property had brought rich returns, but he overextended his resources in the "Pioneer" stage and packet ventures.<sup>151</sup> With the slump in real estate values at Rochester, Bissell faced a critical financial prospect. Yet obstacles in one field only prompted him to plunge more boldly in new directions. When his six-day stage failed to secure the mail contract, a widespread campaign was organized to induce Congress to stop the mails on the Sabbath.<sup>152</sup> And when that measure was defeated, conferences were held with church leaders in New York and

<sup>148</sup> *Observer*, Mar. 3, 1827.

<sup>149</sup> King, *Looking Backward*, pp. 117-118; Joseph Penney, *House of Mirth*.

<sup>150</sup> "The Bissells, Father and Son," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VI, 333-335; Monroe County Bible Society Record Book, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>151</sup> *Observer*, Feb. 22, Aug. 22, 1828; *Craftsman*, Apr. 21, 1829.

<sup>152</sup> *Gem*, Dec. 12, 1829; *Observer*, Nov. 26, Dec. 12, 1828; Jan. 15, 1830; *Craftsman*, Mar. 23, 1830.

Philadelphia at which plans for a national Christian Party were discussed, attracting the interest of certain Antimasons who already felt the need for a more popular national issue.<sup>153</sup>

Yet Bissell's personality was too volatile to provide the community with stable leadership. Moreover, he made enemies too readily.<sup>154</sup> Not only the unregenerate tavern folk and worldly-wise readers of the *Craftsman*, but respectable church people were frequently antagonized by his outspoken condemnation of all who patronized the seven-day stage even on weekdays. *Pioneerism*—the policy of dealing only with strictly Christian enterprises—could be carried too far, as those who organized an anti-Pioneer ball at a nearby Chili tavern apparently felt.<sup>155</sup> When the Reverend William James of the Second Presbyterian Church ventured to ride on the regular stage instead of the Pioneer Line, thus incurring Bissell's disfavor, a controversy full of portent for Rochester developed. Disturbing the relations between James and his parishioners, Bissell advised the pastor, formerly his close friend, that his flock desired a change.<sup>156</sup> But Joseph Penney of First Church rose before the Presbytery to protest against such intermeddling. He would not, he declared, sit by silently and watch William James, who "does not draw well in Bissell's harness," be replaced by the Reverend Asa Mahan from Pittsford, for that would give the zealous Elder "an obedient team—Mahan and Parker."<sup>157</sup> Such autocratic control must be avoided, Penney declared, adding,

I regard [Elder Bissell] as an active man, prosecuting everything he commences with untiring zeal and energy. But there is no distinction with him in his beneficial or injurious purposes, all are the same if he has enlisted in them; they are pursued with the same spirit, right or wrong. . . . I do not impute his measures to wicked motives; but to a willful course, deprecated by many, lamented by all, and perverting the influence of the church.<sup>158</sup>

So acrimonious did this controversy become that the pastors involved soon sought other charges. James was the first to leave, followed shortly by Parker who removed to New York where he became a central figure in Finney's Free Church movement.<sup>159</sup> Joseph Penney enjoyed a visit to his old home in Northern Ireland. William Wisner was brought from Ithaca to take the Second Church, and Charles G. Finney was per-

<sup>153</sup> *Craftsman*, Mar. 3, 10, 1829; J. G. Bennett, "Diary," Folio 19.

<sup>154</sup> *Observer*, Mar. 12, 20, 1829.

<sup>155</sup> *Observer*, Jan. 15, 1830.

<sup>156</sup> Ferdinand Ward to Henrietta Ward, 1830, Clarke Letters, in possession of Mrs. Buell Mills, Rochester, N. Y.

<sup>157</sup> Mahan was later first president of Oberlin College. "Asa Mahan," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XII, 208-209.

<sup>158</sup> *Craftsman*, Mar. 9, 1830.

<sup>159</sup> *Observer*, June 18, 1830; Gilbert H. Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, pp. 3-16, 21-22.

sueded to come from New York to fill the Third Church and try to revive harmony within the Presbyterian fold at Rochester.<sup>160</sup>

Finney's reputation was already well established. His remarkable successes in central New York five years before had been repeated at Philadelphia and Boston and finally in New York itself. To his earlier "new measures," such as the "anxious seat" and the "Holy Band," had been added a vision of "disinterested benevolence" and practical Christianity which was finding abundant expression in the social causes backed so generously by the rich Tappan brothers in New York.<sup>161</sup> Rochester likewise had its patron of moral reforms in Elder Bissell, sometimes compared with Arthur Tappan,<sup>162</sup> and it was at Bissell's home that Finney was entertained.

Tall and grave in appearance, with a dynamic spirit and logical argument, Finney soon commanded the respect of sober church folk in Rochester. Laymen were pleased by his simple solution of the old doctrinal debate over the relative merits of *faith* and *works*. "Genuine faith," he declared, "always results in good works and is itself a good work."<sup>163</sup> Four short weeks after his arrival, the *Observer* rejoiced that "Christians of different denominations are seen mingling together on the Sabbath and bowing at the same altar in the weekly prayer meetings."<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the work of regeneration was "refreshing" the entire community as Finney, preaching three sermons each Sabbath and conducting four or more services during the week, visited the different Presbyterian churches in turn and sometimes the Baptist and Methodist chapels as well. The Holy Band of his assistants enlisted the coöperation of pastors from neighboring villages, while the fiery young zealot, Theodore Weld, came on from the East to lend aid.<sup>165</sup>

Positive results soon began to appear. Finney's unclerical garb and lawyer-like arguments disarmed many determined skeptics, while students at the High School became distracted by an irresistible concern

<sup>160</sup> *Roch. Republican*, July 26, 1831; Josiah Bissell to Rev. C. G. Finney, Rochester, Sept. 15, 1829, photostat in Bissell autograph folder, R. P. L. For the Reverends Parker, Wisner, and Mahan, see *Letters of T. D. Weld*, pp. 50n, 69n, 79n.

<sup>161</sup> Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, pp. 1-28. Perhaps unwittingly Finney was carrying forward the line of reasoning advanced by Jonathan Edwards several decades before when he sought to harmonize Calvinist doctrine with the new evangelistic trends of the Great Awakening of his day; see Ola E. Winslow, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 1940), pp. 292-312, espec. 308-309.

<sup>162</sup> Bennett, "Diary," Folio 19.

<sup>163</sup> Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (6th ed., New York, 1835), pp. 7-15. Although this and later quotations are from a series delivered in New York a few years later, Finney's doctrines were already clearly elaborated before his first arrival in Rochester. See the brief report of his Rochester sermon on "Faith and Works" in *Observer*, Nov. 12, 1830.

<sup>164</sup> *Observer*, Oct. 15, 1830.

<sup>165</sup> *Observer*, Oct. 22, 29, 1830; Jan. 7, 1831; *Gem*, Apr. 16, 1831.

for their souls. So great was the assemblage on one occasion at First Church that the weight of the balconies spread the walls, releasing one of the rafters and causing a stampede for the doors.<sup>166</sup> The work continued without interruption, however, until some four hundred new families were drawn into the fold.<sup>167</sup> The converts included several destined to play vital roles in the town's history: Samuel D. Porter, a young man who emerged as a leading reformer during the forties, Alvah Strong, who soon became a chief pillar of the Baptist Church, and later of the University as well, and young Henry B. Stanton, destined to marry Elizabeth Cady and himself play a prominent role in the years ahead.<sup>168</sup>



A major result of Finney's preaching was the fresh stimulus imparted to numerous humanitarian activities. His equalitarian faith—that all men can be saved—not only gave reassurance to many individuals previously baffled by Calvinist determinism, but also gratified the psychological needs of others suffering from the hardships of Rochester's first recession. Preoccupation with worldly affairs was branded, together with other forms of selfishness, as a major sin. But Finney, never content with the passive repentance of sinners, regarded conversion as merely the beginning of a Christian life. Charity, temperance, tolerance, and humility were held up as the true evidences and proper works for Christian men. Though his arguments presented little that was new or especially profound, backed by his evangelistic fervor, they released and coordinated the moral energies of a community already throbbing with optimistic individualism.<sup>169</sup>

The temperance movement had previously gained considerable headway. With at least four local temperance societies organized in the late twenties, crowds attended the annual meetings of the Monroe County Temperance Society at the Court House.<sup>170</sup> Early in 1830 it was announced that ten professed Christians of Rochester, though "busily

<sup>166</sup> *Advertiser*, Oct. 9, Dec. 24, 1830; H. Pomeroy Brewster, "The Magic of a Voice," R. H. S., *Pub.*, IV, 280-282; King, *Looking Backward*, pp. 119-127.

<sup>167</sup> *Observer*, May 31, 1831; "Bradford King Diary," Oct.-Dec., 1830, MS, University of Rochester. See Robert S. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College* (Oberlin, 1943), pp. 17-24, for a full account of this revival.

<sup>168</sup> Rev. Augustus H. Strong, "Historical Sketch," *Centennial Celebration: First Baptist Church* (Rochester, 1918), pp. 12-13; "H. B. Stanton's Recollections," Samson Scrapbook (Studies in Local History), pp. 27-28, *Roch. Hist. Soc.*; *Letters of T. D. Weld*, pp. 51n, 69-71.

<sup>169</sup> C. G. Finney, *Lectures to Professing Christians* (New York, 1837), pp. 410-425; Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, p. 11; Ralph H. Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought* (New York, 1940), pp. 32-38; Carl R. Fish, *The Rise of the Common Man* (New York, 1927), pp. 1-12; Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York, 1943), pp. 310-313.

<sup>170</sup> *Observer*, Sept. 25, 1829; Jan. 8, 1830.

engaged in worldly affairs, were ready to talk in favor of every good object, particularly temperance."<sup>171</sup> Colonel Riley, Jonathan Child, Levi Ward, and E. F. Marshall, the Hicksite Quaker, took a prominent part in the agitation, supported most zealously by Samuel Chipman, editor of the *Observer*, and spokesman for Josiah Bissell.<sup>172</sup> When a meeting in February discussed the dire plight of the unemployed poor, the *Observer*, regretting that "the principal cause . . . intemperance" had not even been mentioned, admitted that "the poor are no less deserving our attention and assistance because they are reduced to wretchedness and want by legalized Drunkard Manufacturies."<sup>173</sup>

One local zealot, rejoicing that "the value of tavern stands in Rochester and its neighborhood has declined during the last three years—due to temperance societies," added, "Indeed, it has become so unfashionable to drink that people are ashamed to be seen calling for liquor at the bars of our public houses. Four years ago the situation was the reverse!"<sup>174</sup> After the earnest appeals of Finney and Weld it was reported that, while twenty of Rochester's confirmed drunkards had met death during the year as a result of the vice, twenty-one others had signed the pledge.<sup>175</sup> When numerous liquor dealers sold out or dumped their stock, half the groceries on the east side joined the temperance band.<sup>176</sup> A full-time agent was appointed to distribute temperance tracts, while Everard Peck issued the first *Temperance Almanack* in the country in 1831.<sup>177</sup> Yet the extreme position of total abstinence advocates aroused sufficient resistance to defeat a first attempt to prohibit all licenses.<sup>178</sup> The issue reappeared suddenly in September, 1833, when a local constable was killed by an angry drunkard.<sup>179</sup> For a time new licenses were refused and the issue overshadowed all others in the first city election. Meanwhile, the Monroe County Temperance Society's affiliated organizations within the county had grown to twenty, totalling over 3000 members.<sup>180</sup>

Several other reform movements appeared in Rochester during these years. The *Observer* sponsored an Anti-Tobacco Society, apparently with little success, in 1829;<sup>181</sup> an anti-war lecture was delivered by a representative of the Massachusetts Peace Society,<sup>182</sup> while antislavery

<sup>171</sup> *Observer*, Feb. 26, Mar. 5, 1830.

<sup>172</sup> *Craftsman*, Sept. 29, 1830.

<sup>173</sup> *Observer*, Feb. 19, 1830.

<sup>174</sup> Griffin, *Address Delivered at Rochester*, p. 9.

<sup>175</sup> *Observer*, Jan. 7, 1831.

<sup>176</sup> *Observer*, May 21, 1830.

<sup>177</sup> *Observer*, Oct. 15, 1830; *Temperance Almanack* for 1831, 1832, 1833, 1834. Printed by E. Peck, Rochester.

<sup>178</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Apr. 21, May 19, 1832.

<sup>179</sup> *Inquirer*, Sept. 17, 1833.

<sup>180</sup> *Enquirer*, June 14, 1831.

<sup>181</sup> *Observer*, Oct. 23, 1829.

<sup>182</sup> *Inquirer*, Aug. 6, 1833.

agitation began to receive local attention in 1833.<sup>183</sup> Likewise from the East came a new concern for depraved females, stimulating the organization of a Moral Reform Society, and prompting the Reverend William Wisner to denounce the double standard.<sup>184</sup> A controversy destined to stir the community in later years first appeared when several women ventured to speak out in weekly testimonial meetings, rousing the criticism of conservative elders.<sup>185</sup> Yet a choice "Circle" of zealous men and women, meeting frequently at sunrise prayer services, nurtured a strong spirit of perfectionism and a desire for "deeper works of grace."<sup>186</sup> A Boatmen's Mutual Relief Society, organized by canallers seeking to better their lot,<sup>187</sup> received less attention than the Boatmen's Friend Society, an organization sponsored by those who wished to improve the morals of the "canaille." Inspired by the example of the Seamen's Friend Society in the East, a Bethel chapel was proposed, only to be deferred by the combined opposition of boatmen and forwarders.<sup>188</sup>

Renewed zeal activated the Sabbath schools and missionary societies. The seventh annual convention of the Monroe County Sunday School Union crowded the Court House with delegates from 111 schools, 28 of them reporting classes throughout the year. Over 1,000 teachers gave instruction to more than 15,000 children and to some 5,000 students above 16 years of age. The 20 schools in Rochester numbered 400 teachers, 2,000 students, and an estimated 5,000 children.<sup>189</sup> The work of the missionary societies appeared in the mounting sums raised for that purpose. Elder Bissell, the most active local agent of the American Board of Foreign Missions, reported the receipts for six months in 1829 as \$325.57, while a similar period in 1831 brought in \$574.60.<sup>190</sup> Local interest in the cause was stimulated from time to time by the letters of Delia Stone, daughter of Isaac W. Stone, who had left for the Sandwich Islands in 1827, two years before a Rochester publisher brought out the first translation of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John in the Hawaiian language. Home missions likewise attracted support as funds were raised to send pastors among the Indians and into the new settlements of the West.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>183</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 16, 29, Dec. 21, 1833; *The Rights of Man*, Apr. 26, 1834.

<sup>184</sup> *Observer*, Nov. 9, 1833; Rev. William Wisner, *The Importance of Keeping the Heart* (Rochester, 1834).

<sup>185</sup> *Observer*, Jan. 20, 1831.

<sup>186</sup> Elisabeth Selden Spencer Eaton to Lieutenant Amos Eaton, Rochester, Apr. 11, 16, 20, 23, 1833; Feb. 22, 1834; Elisabeth Selden Spencer Eaton Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Elizabeth Selden Rogers, New York City.

<sup>187</sup> *Observer*, Dec. 29, 1830; Jan. 1, Apr. 7, 1831; *Liberal Advocate*, Apr. 21, 1832.

<sup>188</sup> *Observer*, Aug. 6, 1830; *Liberal Advocate*, May 19, 1832.

<sup>189</sup> *Seventh Report of the Monroe Sunday School Union* (Rochester, 1831).

<sup>190</sup> *Observer*, Sept. 11, 1829, July 14, 1831.

<sup>191</sup> *Observer*, Oct. 13, 1829; Apr. 2, 1830; Edward R. Foreman, "Hawaiian Bible Printed in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 316-318.

A renewed attempt developed in the early thirties to provide Rochester with a suitable institute for the edification of adults. Though the Franklin Institute of the mid-twenties, split asunder by the Antimasonic controversy, struggled along in a moribund fashion until 1833,<sup>192</sup> most of its leaders withdrew in June, 1829, to found the Rochester Athenaeum. When the aged Colonel Rochester became the Athenaeum's first president, a hall on the second floor of the Arcade was made available by Abelard Reynolds.<sup>193</sup> A favorable charter, secured from the legislature, permitted the collection of funds for a library through annual five dollar fees. The dues unfortunately restricted the membership, which numbered only 130 in 1834, but a library of some 400 volumes, a newspaper exchange that secured the current issues of most Eastern papers,<sup>194</sup> and frequent meetings afforded some opportunity for the intellectual development of favored townsmen. An affiliated organization, known as the Young Men's Society, was formed in 1833 and welcomed to the rooms of the Athenaeum. Dr. Levi Ward, the town's leading patron of educational projects, became president of the Athenaeum sometime after Col. Rochester's death, and several of the latter's 84 books were presented to that institution. The inventory of Elder Bissell's estate reported 128 volumes plus 29 school books. Judging from the titles advertised by the two local bookstores and Moore's circulating library, not to mention the output of the local press, interested townsmen did not lack reading material.<sup>195</sup>

To each of these activities the Finney revival brought increased popular support. The twin virtues, charity and temperance, prospered, but their less favored sister, tolerance, developed a distorted character. Yet Josiah Pierson was moved to rejoice over the signs of the millennium evident in the new cordiality between several of the Protestant churches:

The minor points, on which the Christian world  
Were set at variance, much, in former days,  
Had all grown obsolete. No Methodist,  
Nor Presbyterian, now, nor Churchman, high  
Or low, nor Covenanter—Baptist—none  
Claim'd preference for his creed. The antique phrase,  
"Denomination" long had been expung'd,  
And "friends," and "enemies" describ'd the whole  
Of the great family of man.<sup>196</sup>

<sup>192</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 29, 1833.

<sup>193</sup> *Craftsman*, June 23, 30, 1829.

<sup>194</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 16, 1832.

<sup>195</sup> Blake McKelvey, "Early Library Developments," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XVI, 29-31. I am indebted to Mrs. Alice T. Sutton for checking the inventories of numerous early Rochesterians in the Surrogate's Court.

<sup>196</sup> Rev. Josiah Pierson, *Millennium, A Poem in Five Books* (Rochester, 1831), p. 67.



The battle line between truth and error was being reformed to take advantage of America's cultural contours. Thus the *Observer*, having exhausted the possibilities of the old disputes between faith and works and over the merits of revivals, decided in the summer of 1830 to seek new issues on which the principal Protestant churches could unite.<sup>197</sup> Controversies of the sort were at hand, for the Universalist and Unitarian heresies had now reached Rochester. Despite frequent attacks on their doctrines, these small dissident groups leased the Court House for services on the Sabbath until the Antimasons, capturing control of the board of supervisors, terminated the arrangement.<sup>198</sup> Possibly the large contribution of Connecticut and western Massachusetts to the city's population—the fact that seven of the thirteen college graduates living in Rochester in 1830 were Yale men while none hailed from Harvard—may have accounted in part for the unpopularity of the Unitarians, though the chief attack came from those who felt little more sympathy for the scientific stirrings at Yale. After struggling along for a time, the Unitarian society shortly dropped from view.<sup>199</sup>

The *Observer's* ire was most frequently roused by the thriving congregation at St. Patrick's. A lengthy article on "Popery," signed "Republicus," stimulated an indignant reply from the Reverend Michael McNamara, printed in the *Advertiser*, asking the identity of "Republicus" so that the issue could be discussed frankly in the open. The *Observer* reprinted the reply together with a second article by "Republicus," and a regular column of "Posers for Papists" ran for several months; but Father McNamara did not deign to take further public notice of his anonymous adversary.<sup>200</sup> The growth of the Catholic society continued unabated, supported as it was by the increasing number of Irish and German townfolk. A stone church in the Gothic style soon replaced the earlier modest chapel.<sup>201</sup> The coöperation of the resident priest was welcomed from time to time in the temperance societies, while in 1832, when cholera threatened the town, the Reverend J. F. McGerry, successor to Father McNamara, joined with the other clergy of the village in a day of fasting and prayer.<sup>202</sup>

Perhaps the most explosive battle of the period was that fought by the *Observer* against the succession of worldly-wise editors who strug-

<sup>197</sup> *Observer*, May 28, June 11, 1830.

<sup>198</sup> *Craftsman*, Mar. 10, 1829; *Advertiser*, Oct. 31, 1829; *Observer*, Nov. 5, 1830; Pitt Morse, *Sermons in Vindication of Universalism in reply to . . . Joel Parker of Rochester* (Watertown, 1831).

<sup>199</sup> Rev. Orlo J. Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XII, 257-291.

<sup>200</sup> *Observer*, Apr. 16, 1830; also subsequent issues.

<sup>201</sup> *Enquirer*, Sept. 15, 1829; *Advertiser*, Sept. 16, 1829; *Directory* (1834), p. 9.

<sup>202</sup> *Advertiser*, June 21, 1832; Rev. Frederick J. Zwierlein, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 194-197.

gled for a foothold in Rochester. The literature of "Bobby" Owen and "Fanny" Wright was circulating through the area, endangering the minds of the young, as the *Observer* warned, expressing joy when Orestes A. Brownson gave up the attempt to establish a Fanny Wright paper in nearby LeRoy.<sup>203</sup> Rochester soon had its own papers of this variety, and though most were fleeting, one or another of them proved a fairly constant annoyance to the pious editors of the *Observer*. The first, *Plain Truth*,<sup>204</sup> was published semi-monthly during the summer of 1828 by the booksellers Marshall and Dean, but its attempts "to unmask the frauds and crimes committed under the guise of Bible, missionary, and other religious societies" quickly brought its downfall. *The Spirit of the Age*, published by two editors from Canandaigua, was advertised as semi-literary and semi-reform in character, while the revived *Paul Pry* featured striking bits of gossip best printed anonymously.<sup>205</sup>

More important was the *Craftsman*, founded and maintained as a defender of Masonry, but equally valiant in championing other unpopular causes. The editor, Elijah J. Roberts, crossed swords not only with the *Observer*, but also with O'Reilly on the *Republican*. The latter's desire to see the Antimasonic controversy die after the surrender of the local Masonic charters was not shared by Roberts, who demanded a complete vindication of the fraternity. Friction developed again when the *Republican* and the *Craftsman* each accused the other of turning the Mutual Association and the imprisonment-for-debt issue to political ends.<sup>206</sup> In any case, O'Reilly emerged as the local Jacksonian leader, while Roberts, having failed in his successive tussles with Weed of the *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, Chipman of the *Observer*, and O'Reilly of the *Republican*, left for Buffalo in 1831 at the end of a two-year struggle.<sup>207</sup>

Disapproval of the fanaticism engendered by revivals found expression in a public meeting at McCracken's Inn in January, 1831. Between six and seven hundred persons gathered to protest laws against "hunting, fishing, sporting and playing" on the Sabbath, as well as the additional restraints advocated by the Pioneers. The Friends of Liberal Principles, claiming an increase in numbers over similar gatherings in earlier years, condemned the practice of imprisonment for debt, the requirement of

<sup>203</sup> *Observer*, Sept. 17, Nov. 26, 1830; see Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen*, pp. 65-102; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Orestes A. Brownson, A Pilgrim's Progress* (Boston, 1939).

<sup>204</sup> *Album*, Apr. 8, 1828; *Craftsman*, Mar. 31, 1829.

<sup>205</sup> *Craftsman*, Mar. 31, Oct. 13, 1829.

<sup>206</sup> *Craftsman*, Sept. 24, Oct. 13, 1829.

<sup>207</sup> *Observer*, June 5, 1829; *Enquirer*, June 15, 1830; *Advertiser*, Jan. 27, 1830; *Democrat*, Jan. 10, 1843; Hamilton, *The Country Printer*, pp. 294-295. After two struggling years in Buffalo, Roberts moved on to Detroit where he enjoyed a more successful career.

religious oaths in legal matters, and warned against the far-reaching activities of Bible and tract societies.<sup>208</sup> The proposed National Christian Party was branded a threat to the liberties of the people.<sup>209</sup> But the death of Josiah Bissell a few months later<sup>210</sup> removed the chief Rochester proponent of the more extreme reform measures, while the conclusion of Finney's revival at the same time provided a sorely needed breathing spell for both sides.

Yet the lull was not of long duration. The more strictly political journals, preparing for the coming election, sought to avoid controversy with the *Observer*, which continued its crusade unabated, but a new paper, the *Liberal Advocate*, invaded the town early in 1832 as an avowed foe of "sectarian dogma and prejudice."<sup>211</sup> Obediah Dogberry, the editor, coming from Palmyra where his *Reflector* had roused much criticism, proceeded to court opposition in Rochester. Warning was given of an attempt to treat the community to a "second edition of the Finney excitement." A new revival had indeed started, and a fresh attack upon groceries prompted Dogberry to declare his support of "temperance in all things including opinions," lamenting its absence from this "gospel hardened" town.<sup>212</sup> Heaping scorn upon the *Observer* for advising Christian maidens not to endanger their eternal happiness by marrying unbelievers, Dogberry blamed the protracted meetings for distracting attention from civic and commercial affairs. On the other hand, religious minorities attracted his forbearance, and when a report reached Rochester that Joseph Smith, Dogberry's former neighbor in Palmyra, had been coated with tar and feathers, the *Liberal Advocate* protested.<sup>213</sup>

The fires of evangelism and the tempers of its opponents burned less intensely after the cholera epidemic of 1832. Though a new "shower" fell on the Methodist church with the visit of the Reverend Jedediah Burchard,<sup>214</sup> and similar revivals "refreshed" communities round about, the *Liberal Advocate* rejoiced in January, 1833, that

our own "City of Mud" [giving that unhappy cognomen a new twist] has for some weeks been free from any . . . showers. . . . Backsliding is becoming the order of the day. . . . The nerves of our citizens have become

<sup>208</sup> *Proceedings of the Friends of Liberal Principles and Equal Rights in Rochester—January, 1831* (Rochester, 1831); see also Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen*.

<sup>209</sup> *Craftsman*, Mar. 3, 10, 1829.

<sup>210</sup> *Rock. Republican*, Apr. 12, 1831; *Observer*, Apr. 7, 21, 1831; Henrietta Bissell to the Rev. C. G. Finney, Rochester, Apr. 16, 1831, photostat in Bissell autograph folder, Roch. Public Library.

<sup>211</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Feb. 23, 1832; Albert Post, *Popular Freethought in America*,

p. 59.

<sup>212</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Mar. 3, 1832.

<sup>213</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Mar. 10, 24, Apr. 7, 14, 28, 1832.

<sup>214</sup> Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," p. 260.

quite tranquil. . . . Upon the whole we congratulate our friends, readers and borrowers, and the whole world besides, upon the universal happiness which on every hand surrounds us.<sup>215</sup>

Unfortunately, backsliders and borrowers were good omens for neither the *Observer* nor the *Liberal Advocate*. The former, in straitened circumstances by 1833, sold out and moved to New York, while the *Liberal Advocate* continued for another brief year, threatening delinquent subscribers with the publication of their names in a "black list."<sup>216</sup> Dogberry enjoyed a parting blast at Rochester's "over ambitious church edifices" on which, he declared, more funds had been lavished than were collected in taxes.<sup>217</sup> The First Presbyterian had lost a worthy pastor with the departure of Joseph Penney, Dogberry conceded; St. Luke's would doubtless be able to pay the debt on its enlarged building, but St. Paul's had already been foreclosed and reorganized as Grace Church, and the Third Presbyterian had been sold to the Baptists, who, together with the Methodists and the Catholics, were growing in numbers; still another schism was developing at the recently established Free (Presbyterian) Church, where the Reverend Luke Lyons was vainly attempting to revive the excitement of a few years before with a fresh use of the old "new measures."<sup>218</sup>

With the demise of the *Liberal Advocate* Rochester's vocal champions of rationalism disappeared, but the victorious forces of evangelism confronted a much sturdier foe, the materialism of returning prosperity. Even the devoted Ferdinand Ward, youngest son of Dr. Levi Ward, just back from theological study at Princeton and soon to carry the Word of God to India, felt baffled by the emerging city:

Indeed I never saw our city so lively as at present. But you may ask, where is Religion?—Alas it is hid—Christians have forgotten that *they are not their own*—and world—world is the controlling object of thought and action. I have preached three times since my return, but nothing would induce me to remain during the winter.<sup>219</sup>



Happily the distraught townsfolk were able to maintain some of the color and vitality of their social life even during the height of the successive revivals. Though the new theater was converted into a livery stable, the old circus remained, featuring animal shows and varied ex-

<sup>215</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Jan. 1, 1833.

<sup>216</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 30, 1833; *Liberal Advocate*, Mar. 22, 1834. A similar decline marked the free thought movement in the East; see Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>217</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Mar. 31, 1832; Apr. 6, 1834.

<sup>218</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Apr. 6, July 7, 1834.

<sup>219</sup> Ferdinand Ward to Mrs. Freeman Clarke, Rochester, 1834, Clarke Letters; Barton, *Obituary Scrapbook*, p. 16.

hibitions, and in September, 1830, a troupe of actors from the East, including young Louisa Lane, future wife of John Drew, played for several nights before Rochester audiences. Programs of sacred music were occasionally presented by the leading churches, while the band gave frequent concerts.<sup>220</sup> The outstanding event in the art field, the display of William Dunlap's painting of the Crucifixion, evoked lengthy comments on its artistic merits. Citizens were urged to pay the admission fee of 25 cents; Sunday school children were admitted free. The declining number of groceries and grog shops cleared the way for soda fountains at which the more respectable could seek a refreshing drink.<sup>221</sup>

As in earlier years, the simple domestic chores, the everyday affairs of the canal, the mills, the market place, and the taverns overshadowed the commercialized amusements. Hamlet Scrantom, now advancing in years, still set his hens and took a special interest in the arrival of a new calf.<sup>222</sup> Most householders tended their gardens, though "the difficulties we had last year with Dr. Ward's fowels [sic] and occasionally the intrusion of pigs and cows among the vegetables" led to greater reliance on the public market.<sup>223</sup> The occasional arrival from Michigan of a barrel of radishes packed in ice, or some like novelty, suggested the future possibilities of the produce trade, but generally farmers on the edge of town, not yet a mile distant from any house, supplied household demands.

These everyday aspects of Rochester's life found their best chronicler in young Edwin Scrantom, who had literally grown up with the town. Early in 1829 he established a quaint little publication, the *Gem*, dedicated to the literary and domestic interests of the community.<sup>224</sup> In the course of a year its first thirteen subscribers increased to over five hundred,<sup>225</sup> permitting the editor to enlarge its size, and include occasional engravings of romantic scenes. Though he paused from time to time to deprecate the intensity of local political and religious disputes, Scrantom was ever ready to describe the pageantry about him. On one occasion he reported:

<sup>220</sup> O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 317; *Gem*, Sept. 25, 1830; *Advertiser*, Apr. 26, May 5, 10, 1830.

<sup>221</sup> *Gem*, Aug. 14, Oct. 30, 1830; William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (originally printed in 1834, republished in 1918, Frank W. Bailey, ed.), pp. 354-355. Dunlap had paid three earlier visits to Rochester.

<sup>222</sup> H. Scrantom, *Journal*, April, May, 1830, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>223</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Charleston, S. C., Mar. 21, 1833, Schermerhorn Letters.

<sup>224</sup> *Gem*, 1829-1843 (known as *The Gem and Ladies' Amulet* from Jan. 10, 1835, on). The *Gem* followed an earlier periodical, the *Western Wanderer and Ladies Literary Magnet*, of which but one or two issues were produced in February, 1829.

<sup>225</sup> *Gem*. Dec. 26, 1829.

We were present when the water was let into the Canal. It was an interesting sight to hundreds who had been waiting for the event. There were in scores, boatmen with their painted hats and everlasting coats, marching to and fro, making remarks upon the canal, &c. There were also, the impudent drivers with hats turned up before, and whips 'tip'd with plenty of silk.'—There were groupes of second hand captains . . . together with various other groupes, that seemed all interested in the filling up of 'the big ditch.' We could see that many a rusty bugle had been brightened for the coming season. . . . The dealers in 'small wares,' that line the canal in the summer season, were all in motion, brightening up their cook-rooms, and 'buying up a stock.' Among this class, a variety of *kegs* and *bottles* made glad the hearts of the wanton and inveterate.<sup>226</sup>

Several more ambitious efforts were made to exploit the local scene for literary ends. The *Gem* printed "The Warrior Chief," a frontier tale set in the Rochester area but lacking other interest.<sup>227</sup> The cool reception accorded two early attempts by traveling actors to dramatize local subjects for their Rochester audiences discouraged further efforts in that field.<sup>228</sup> Worthy of note, however, was the lengthy *Rochester: A Satire* written in verse in the Scottish brogue by James Mathies, brother of the town's colorful art patron and tavern keeper. Rochester was most unfortunate in the early death of the youthful bard, who

Being indispos'd and in the dumps,  
Ane night I stroll'd amang the stumps,  
I saw gay steeds wi' spotted rumps  
Performing *Circus*,  
And lads and lassies round in clumps,  
Real bonny smirkies.<sup>229</sup>

The most important use of the Rochester area in fiction was *Lawrie Todd* by the Englishman, John Galt. The story, although written without careful study of the setting, caught some of the spirit of the early years. Yet it attracted scant notice in Rochester during the thirties, for the town was scarcely old enough to romanticize its pioneers.<sup>230</sup>

The activities of its frontier days were being displaced by new amusements. Despite the protest of Sabbath reformers, horse cars carried many a gay party down to Carthage on that day, while lake

<sup>226</sup> *Gem*, Apr. 16, 1831.

<sup>227</sup> *Gem*, Dec. 12, 1829.

<sup>228</sup> The first dramatic season had concluded in 1826 with a "new melodrama . . . written in this village, 'The Vale of the Genesee, or Big Tree Chief,'" *Roch. Republican*, June 13, 1826. C. S. Talbot's *Captain Morgan* has already been noted, p. 145.

<sup>229</sup> James Mathies, *Rochester; A Satire; and Other Miscellaneous Poems* (Rochester, 1830).

<sup>230</sup> John Galt, *Lawrie Todd* (New York, 1830); *Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1833; Jane M. Parker, "Lawrie Todd," *R. H. S., Pub.*, IV, 223-227.

excursions were occasionally enjoyed. The North Rochester races provided excitement for three days late in 1832, and on another occasion a group of boisterous young men took a "boat ride" over the snow-covered streets of the village. Frequent visits to nearby Monroe and Avon Springs supplied variety, if not always the health and entertainment advertised.<sup>231</sup>

Travel for health and diversion was becoming a definite part of the program of those who could afford it. Saratoga, Florida, and even Europe loomed on the horizon, though barely a half-dozen Rochesterians journeyed so far in this period. Before setting out for St. Augustine in the late fall of 1832, J. M. Schermerhorn prepared his will. On the leisurely trip down he visited his friends, Finney and Weld, in New York, and on reaching St. Augustine, Florida, was pleased to find, among the twenty-two Americans stopping there, three clergymen who said grace at every meal and provided religious instruction at all times, resulting in the happy conversion of two of the guests. Journeying back by horseback, he stopped in Charleston long enough to write his wife asking her to pray for that wicked city.<sup>232</sup>

Dr. Anson Colman, after earlier medical studies in Boston, Philadelphia, and Montreal, spent several weeks in the medical centers of London and Paris. There he marvelled at the remarkable development of public museums, galleries, and charitable institutions, as well as at the deplorable lack of individual comforts. The cheapness of life and the congested living arrangements astounded him, while other features impelled him to advise his pastor, Dr. Whitehouse, never to come to Paris, as "he would see so much of the vice and hypocrisy of this country as to depress his spirits for the rest of his life." Yet his foot-loose brother-in-law and companion, Nathaniel T. Rochester, becoming "travelling mad," was soon out of reach in Italy or Germany, forcing the impatient doctor to return alone.<sup>233</sup>

Rochester seemed a welcome haven to its returning citizens. "Never in our country . . . will it be possible to rear and sustain the immense institutions" of Paris or London, declared Dr. Colman without regret, though he had found sermons and "food fit for man" at the latter place. The comforts of his Rochester home were much more agreeable, and he could not understand his wife's pleasure in a trip down the St. Lawrence to Quebec and by stage through the Eastern states to Baltimore. The cares of his household—taking the children to school, directing the activities of three household servants, attending

<sup>231</sup> *Liberal Advocate*, Mar. 3, May 25, Oct. 13, Nov. 3, 1832; *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 14, Sept. 4, 1832.

<sup>232</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, October, 1832–April, 1833, Schermerhorn Letters.

<sup>233</sup> Colman Letters, January–May, 1833.

all the meals in order to maintain a properly ordered family—proved a strain when added to his growing practice. He vowed never again to consent to the unnecessary absence of his wife.<sup>234</sup>

Few townsfolk were so fortunately situated as the members of the Rochester clan after the settlement of the will left by the aged proprietor, who passed away quietly at his Spring Street home in May, 1831.<sup>235</sup> Yet many others enjoyed comfortable circumstances. House hunting no longer presented the discouragements of the early days, for builders had begun to catch up with the more moderate population growth. J. M. Schermerhorn, debating the respective merits of two comfortable residences with four rooms on both floors and a front and back stairway, advised his wife not to order a piano from the East as one could be rented for a time in Rochester.<sup>236</sup> Drafty fireplaces were giving place to Franklin stoves, and the more particular housewives, refusing to admit stove pipes into their parlors, were insisting—if trust can be placed in a furnace advertisement—on a coal furnace in the cellar from which the whole house could be heated by hot air.<sup>237</sup>

The great majority shared few of these comforts. Even when the Chemung Canal tapped a new coal supply, bringing the price down from eleven to five dollars a ton,<sup>238</sup> workmen who made at best only four or five hundred dollars a year could not afford the luxury of a furnace or a house of more than four rooms. A workman could get a dollar a day for seasonal labor on neighboring farms, while skilled mechanics could expect something better in town, but the demand of boat caulkers for two dollars a day in 1831 was considered unreasonable. If one had a grown daughter to hire out as a domestic, five to seven dollars a month could be added to the family income, and of course garden space was generally available. The town averaged slightly more than one cow and two pigs to each household.<sup>239</sup>

In the transition from village to city the problem of the working day began to emerge. Thus in 1833, when the carpenters, among others, sought to limit their hours to ten a day,<sup>240</sup> many warned that idleness and intemperance would result. Mechanics were still primarily apprentices or hired men, walking to and from work with the boss and not infrequently boarding at his house. A few journeymen's associations

<sup>234</sup> Colman Letters, Jan. 18, Apr. 22, Oct. 13, 1833.

<sup>235</sup> *Roch. Republican*, May 17, 1831; *Enquirer*, May 24, 1831; Charles A. Dewey, "Nathaniel Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, III, 276.

<sup>236</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Sept. 7, 1831, Schermerhorn Letters.

<sup>237</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, Jan. 26, 1833.

<sup>238</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, Jan. 26, 1833.

<sup>239</sup> Joseph Webb to his family in England, Rochester, Oct. 26, 1833, typed copy, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Advertiser*, Mar. 17, 1831; N. Y. *Census* (1835).

<sup>240</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 9, 1833; *Democrat*, Apr. 18, 1834.



were organizing on Eastern models, but the girls in the local cotton factory showed no inclination to follow the lead of their striking sisters in Lowell.<sup>241</sup> The Court House bell and the tower clock installed in the First Presbyterian Church in 1831 provided the first public time standards other than Old Sol, except on the Sabbath when the "solemn ding donging of the several church bells" contributed a sober orderliness.<sup>242</sup>

An excellent view of the bustling town was preserved by an observant citizen, possibly Edwin Scrantom, who stationed himself in the observatory over the Arcade at daybreak one June morning in the early thirties. The "venders of eatables" and the "milkman's cart" first appeared, quickly followed by "an heterogeneous mass of men, all wending their way to market." Soon the mechanics and the merchants walked briskly to work. "About seven, the various buildings sent forth their representatives to breakfast. Then could be seen the yet slumbering clerks reclining upon the boxes outside the doors, or stretched at full length on the counters during the absence of their employers." About ten arrived the creaking farm wagons, loaded with "wheat, corn, oats, apples, potatoes, butter, cheese and every thing that we poor *cits* could not live without." Amidst the hubbub of "bartering and bargaining, buying and selling" appeared several ladies bedecked with "formidable headpieces and *popish* sleeves," for it was the fashionable hour for a promenade. "The clink of the hammer was suspended for a time . . . when the bell rang for twelve" bringing out the "mechanics en masse, preparing for dinner." About one, "the merchants and gentlemen of the profession were seen with a hurried step" heading for home, whence they returned an hour later "with each his cigar half smoked and commenced the business of the afternoon with all the zeal imaginable." A few beggars scurried from door to door, and at three several "*exquisites*, disguised with sugar-loaf hats, frizzled hair, *tights*, eau de Cologne, and black gloves," strolled to dine in accordance with the "European taste." The hours from three to five were filled with "noise and confusion, bustle and business. Ladies, dandies, gentlemen, children, dogs, horses, carts, wagons, trucks, stages . . . kept alive the streets." At five the farmers began to leave and the school children came bounding along the streets. At six everybody hastened to supper—except those who were impatiently waiting for the postman to sort the mail. The author of "A Day in the Observatory" eagerly joined the latter group.<sup>243</sup>

Yet, despite its bustle, Rochester was remembered as a quiet and orderly town by one young prodigal who found himself in a giddy whirl

<sup>241</sup> *Advertiser and Telegraph*, Nov. 20, 1829; *Liberal Advocate*, Mar. 22, Apr. 6,

1834.

<sup>242</sup> *Gem*, Aug. 13, 1831; *Liberal Advocate*, July 21, 1832.

<sup>243</sup> *Gem*, June 26, 1830.

at Detroit a few years later.<sup>244</sup> Yankee traditions, aided by the business recession and the successive religious revivals, had subdued the Genesee boom town of the mid-twenties, and the community was ready to assume its urban responsibilities with a sober mien which could not, however, hide from view the city's youthful vigor and inexperience.

<sup>244</sup> Old Reub to Frances M. Fox, Detroit, May 18, 1834, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FLOUR CITY: PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY

1834-1850<sup>1</sup>

THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED CITY enjoyed several years of surging optimism before the nation-wide depression of the late thirties brought renewed hardships. Earlier preoccupation with political and religious matters gave way to an increased interest in the town's economic activities. With few exceptions the outstanding personalities were practical men of affairs. Matthew Brown, Levi Ward, and Abelard Reynolds carried on for several years, but younger men were pressing to the fore: Jonathan Child, Jacob Gould, Elisha Johnson, Hervey Ely, Abraham Schermerhorn, James Seymour, Samuel L. Selden, Henry O'Reilly, and a host of new arrivals and sons of the founders. Dark days lay ahead for most of these men, several of whom left Rochester before the end of the period. Fortunately those who remained, together with many able newcomers, successfully guided the Flour City through its protracted depression, enabling the community to achieve a measure of economic stability by the mid-century.

#### YEARS OF GROWTH: 1834-1837

As Rochesterians became aware of the necessity for improving their transport facilities, the enlargement of the Erie Canal, the improvement of the Genesee port, the opening of a new canal up the valley, and the construction of several new railroad lines emerged as major objectives. Though local enterprise hastily shouldered a portion of the burden, government aid was sought for work on the river and canal. With federal funds already contributing to harbor improvements at Buffalo and Oswego, it appeared only fitting that nearly \$50,000 from the same source be expended during the decade on an extension of the pier at the mouth of the Genesee and the provision of a pier light, thus enabling Rochester to maintain an active lake trade.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As in the previous chapters, I am again indebted to several unpublished master's theses at the University of Rochester for careful surveys of these years: Herbert A. Norton, "Prosperity and Adversity: A History of Rochester, 1834-1839" (1938); George M. Fennimore, "The Growth of a City: A History of Rochester, 1839-1843" (1938); Allan Gleason, "History of Labor in Rochester to 1884" (1941).

<sup>2</sup> *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Mar. 27, 1835; *Rochester Republican*, Apr. 18, June 27, 1837; July 17, 1838.

The city's commercial prospects, however, were more closely tied to the Erie Canal, which already began to develop serious flaws. Not only was the sandstone of the much-boasted aqueduct crumbling under exposure, causing serious leaks and threatening the safety of the whole structure,<sup>3</sup> but the seventeen-foot channel proved too narrow for the passing of boats, with the result that one-way traffic was enforced, stalling long lines of waiting boats along the canal on both sides of the river. The owners of the principal boat lines, led by Jonathan Child and represented by Henry O'Reilly as agent in Albany, boldly recommended a new aqueduct.<sup>4</sup> Many advocates of economy urged the merits of a wooden trunk built on the old piers (as in the Mohawk aqueducts further east), while others favored a pond-crossing behind a dam sure to be adequate in case of an enlargement of the entire canal.<sup>5</sup> After prolonged debate, a new stone aqueduct was determined upon, to be located just south of the old structure but turned at an angle so as to improve the approach from the east. Renewed delays held up construction until insistent demands, expressed in frequent memorials and at a canal enlargement convention at Rochester in 1837, finally brought action that year.<sup>6</sup>

An even more protracted agitation urged a canal up the Genesee Valley. When the project was first proposed in the early twenties, Rochester gave only mild support, but a growing desire for trade connections with the Ohio Valley and the hope of reaching a coal supply quickened the Flour City's interest.<sup>7</sup> The possible advantages of a railroad were discounted, despite the economy of construction,<sup>8</sup> since the proposed artery was to carry heavy freight for which the light railroads of the day were scarcely adapted. Support for the Rochester and Olean canal developed in New York City, aroused by the recent completion of the Pennsylvania State Canal and Railway, joining Philadelphia with

<sup>3</sup> *Assembly Documents* (1836), No. 9, quoting a state geological report on the stone of the aqueduct.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Child, *et al.*, to Henry O'Reilly, Rochester, Feb. 14, 1834, O'Reilly MSS, N. Y. Hist. Soc.; *Democrat*, Feb. 22, 1834.

<sup>5</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1834), No. 55, pp. 7, 8; *Assembly Journal* (1834), pp. 170, 929, 1036; James Renwick, *Report on the Mode of Supplying the Erie Canal with Water from Lockport to the Cayuga Marshes* (Rochester, 1846).

<sup>6</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1836), No. 65, 99; *Assembly Journal* (1837), pp. 282, 305.

<sup>7</sup> Whitford, *History of the Canal System.....of New York*, I, 708-727; *Assembly Journal* (1825), pp. 200, 921; (1827), pp. 21, 306; *Republican*, Dec. 29, 1829; Jan. 19, 26, 1830; *Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1831; *Senate Doc.* (1834), No. 55; *Assembly Doc.* (1836), No. 140.

<sup>8</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 7, 1831. A canal would cost \$10,000 to \$12,000 a mile and a railroad only \$3,000 to \$5,000 as then estimated; actually the construction cost of the Genesee Valley Canal, the Tonawanda, and the Rochester and Auburn railroads averaged approximately \$27,000, \$17,000, and \$23,000 per mile respectively, as calculated for their completed portions in 1843. See *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XII (1845), 382; XIII (1845), 58-59.

distant Pittsburgh. A careful survey in 1835 estimated the cost of construction at \$1,824,000, and despite hesitation the work finally commenced two years later.<sup>9</sup>

While the fate of these improvements still awaited state action, Rochester capital boldly pressed forward with the construction of the railroad to Batavia. Jonathan Child, Abraham Schermerhorn, and Frederick Whittlesey became prominent backers, with Elisha Johnson as construction engineer. A single track line, built of two parallel timbers, each mounted with a light strip of metal, and held in place by cross ties every ten feet, advanced over the 32-mile route at an average first cost of \$10,000 a mile.<sup>10</sup> Five years after the grant of its charter the road opened with two wood-burning engines brought by canal boat from the East. Unfortunately the gala celebration on May 11, 1837, was clouded by the somber reports of bank suspensions throughout the land.<sup>11</sup>

Charters for other rail lines in the Rochester area, sought during these years,<sup>12</sup> included two on the southern border of the county,<sup>13</sup> but the rail project of chief interest to the city after the Tonawanda, was that proposing to connect Rochester and Auburn. Though Canandaigua and Geneva investors eagerly demanded action, jealousy over the route coupled with the objections of canal interests enforced delay. Even after the continuous agitation following the first survey in 1830<sup>14</sup> secured the necessary legislation in 1836,<sup>15</sup> construction dragged, postponing completion of the first section between Rochester and Canandaigua until September, 1840.<sup>16</sup>



Fortunately Rochester was throbbing with more than future transport projects in the mid-thirties. Despite the imperfect character of their facilities, trade on both the canal and lake boomed, while stage lines increased in number and popularity. Boat lines supplied a major field for local enterprise, with \$315,000 of Rochester capital invested in nineteen such companies in 1835, though only one, the Pilot and Traders

<sup>9</sup> Senate Journal (1834), pp. 106, 260; (1836), pp. 287, 453, 461.

<sup>10</sup> Report upon the Tonawanda Rail-Road Company, Exhibiting its Present Situation and Future Prospects (Rochester, 1837).

<sup>11</sup> Roch. Republican, May 9, 16, 1837; Edward Hungerford, Men and Iron (New York, 1938), pp. 41-47.

<sup>12</sup> Assembly Journal (1834), pp. 60, 268, 300, 343, 892, 1003; (1836), p. 95; Assembly Doc. (1836), No. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Elisha Johnson to P. Sampson, Batavia, Mar. 29, 1836, Autograph Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>14</sup> Republican, Sept. 28, 1830, Sept. 13, 20, 1831; Democrat, Mar. 20, Dec. 20, Dec. 30, 1834.

<sup>15</sup> Democrat, Mar. 3, Dec. 23, 1835; Jan. 4, May 3, 17, June 7, 1836.

<sup>16</sup> Republican, June 13, July 4, 1837, Mar. 27, July 12, Oct. 16, 1838, May 7, 14, June 18, Aug. 3, 1839; Advertiser, Sept. 11, 1840.

line of Jonathan Child, was owned entirely in the city.<sup>17</sup> Six yards kept these lines supplied with new boats, while some twenty forwarding companies, frequently operating in conjunction with a boat line, competed for Rochester's trade, but the city no longer provided their chief headquarters.<sup>18</sup>

The Genesee lake port enjoyed a marked increase in tolls, which mounted from \$884.48 in 1834 to \$59,116 in 1836.<sup>19</sup> Genesee tariff receipts exceeded those of all but one other lake port,<sup>20</sup> yet the shipping activity could not compare with Oswego's large export trade or Buffalo's still larger traffic on the upper lakes.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the 400 arrivals of lake boats in 1836, landing a cargo valued at \$235,701 (including 200,000 bushels of wheat) and carrying away articles worth \$209,844, while but a fraction of Buffalo's commerce, served the Flour City well as a supplement to the canal.<sup>22</sup>

Rochester's shipments over the Erie still ranked first in value west of the Hudson, totaling \$3,518,335 in 1837, though in tonnage Buffalo, Rome, and Montezuma exceeded the Flour City.<sup>23</sup> Rochester's tolls likewise excelled, but this fact proved less significant, since most of its shipments paid for the long haul to Albany, whereas Buffalo's wheat was usually consigned to the Rochester mills. Yet the steady increase in its toll receipts afforded a sure indication of the city's stable growth. Although the first depression year brought a slight decline, it did not equal that at other ports.<sup>24</sup> Flour, valued at just over \$2,000,000 in 1837, exceeded the total value of all other exports and comprised a good fourth of the flour shipped down the Hudson. Next in importance came merchandise, furniture, ashes, and wheat, revealing the extent to which Rochester drew its products from the Genesee Country. Only merchandise, coal, iron, and sundries arrived from the East in sizable quantities.<sup>25</sup>

The limited character of Rochester's commercial prospects became apparent as those of Buffalo expanded. Many Rochesterians were drawn to Buffalo by its more rapid growth in the early thirties. Such migrants in 1835 included Hamlet Scrantom, Rochester's aging pioneer,

<sup>17</sup> Henry O'Reilly, *Rochester in 1835: Brief Sketches* (Rochester, 1835), p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 21, 1836; Jan. 4, 1837.

<sup>19</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 9, 1835; Nov. 21, 1836; Jan. 4, 1837; *Report upon the Tonawanda Rail-Road*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> O'Reilly, *Rochester in 1835*, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> *Senate Doc.* (1838), No. 35, Stmt. 10 B. Buffalo lake shipments including both loadings and unloadings for 1836 were valued at \$3,404,612, and those of Oswego at \$2,089,204.

<sup>22</sup> *Report upon the Tonawanda Rail-Road*, p. 13; *Democrat*, May 12, 1834; July 7, 1835; Jan. 4, 1836; Jan. 4, 1837; Apr. 28, Dec. 4, 1841.

<sup>23</sup> *Senate Doc.* (1838), No. 35, Stmt. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 242. The tolls had increased from \$164,247 in 1834 to \$190,036 in 1836 and fell to \$179,083 in 1837.

<sup>25</sup> *Senate Doc.* (1838), No. 35, Stmts. 1A, 1B, 8.

whose third son, as editor of the *Gem*, judiciously weighed the advantages of both places:

Well BUFFALO is quite a place after all. It is true you hear none of the clatter of the vast variety of machinery, of which Rochester is so proud, nor are her streets so densely crowded with the wagons and horses of agricultural visitors;—but all the peculiar features of a great *commercial* place are here developed.—The forest of masts—the schooners, ships and steamboats—which line her docks, give her an air of greatness which Rochester can never put on.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Edwin Scrantom and two of his brothers continued to reside in Rochester.

The flour mills, numbering twenty-one by 1835, with ninety-six run of stone, comprised the most important of the numerous manufactories of the city. Occasional fires cleared the ground for the construction of larger mills, thus increasing the number of millstones and the potential capacity, though the number of mills remained fairly constant. The annual output approached 500,000 barrels during the late thirties—second to Baltimore, the leading flour market with upwards of 600,000 to its credit.<sup>27</sup> But flour held a more conspicuous place in the economic life of Rochester than in that of Baltimore, third largest city in the country according to the 1840 census, and a sense of pride developed as Rochester's millers gained wide recognition.



"The principal capital is *borrowed* in the flouring business in this place," declared the sister of Judge Samuel Lee Selden in 1838 when urging her husband to abandon his military career and turn to milling in Rochester. Silas O. Smith, she reported, was willing to rent half of his flouring mill, containing eight run of stones, at \$1500 a year, to a partner who would likewise supply half the operating capital, possibly \$5000 to start with. Only two years as a miller's assistant would be required to learn the business, "a drudgery which might not be so fine for one . . . accustomed to command," the Judge thought, but once the initiatory process were completed he and his friends could easily raise the necessary capital. Indeed the prospect appeared so favorable that Mrs. Eaton proceeded to select a suitable house, standing in the middle of a lot on State Street, surrounded by fine fruit trees, with a barn, woodhouse, and hen coop in the rear, which she learned would be for rent in the spring at \$200 a year.<sup>28</sup>

However, as the city's leading publicist, Henry O'Reilly, declared

<sup>26</sup> *Rochester Gem and Ladies Amulet*, Sept. 9, 1837.

<sup>27</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, IV (1841), 194-195; O'Reilly, *Rochester in 1835*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Dec. 8, 1837; Jan. 31, Feb. 5, Apr. 27, 1838, E. S. S. Eaton Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Elizabeth Selden Rogers, New York City.

in 1835, "The flouring business, although it is that for which Rochester is at present most celebrated, is by no means of such importance to the real welfare of the city as the other branches of manufactures." Twenty-five different industrial categories, with a total capitalization estimated at least to equal that of the flour mills, upwards of \$500,000, supplied the bustle that ranked the Flour City next to Pittsburgh and Cincinnati among the interior industrial centers of 1835.<sup>29</sup> To the cooper shops, lumber mills, and boatyards were added cabinet, furniture, and carriage factories, whose products found ready sale throughout the area. The carpet factory, destroyed in the bridge fire of 1834 but rebuilt the next year, gave employment to forty-odd persons, one of the largest labor forces in the city.<sup>30</sup> Two woolen mills and an increased activity among sheep raisers, who reported flocks numbering 600,000 in the Genesee Country in 1835, made Rochester an important wool market with Aaron Erickson as its leading merchant.<sup>31</sup> Two large tanneries, several leatherworkers, and twenty boot- and shoemakers provided profitable employment and easily marketable articles, as did a paper mill and numerous printing establishments. Twenty-two tailors produced to order while three large "emporiums of fashion" solicited the trade of busy travelers on Exchange Street.<sup>32</sup> Increased coal, supplied by way of the Erie and Chenango Canals, spurred the expansion of foundries and trip-hammer shops, and a hollow-ware factory made its appearance.<sup>33</sup> One firm, a loose joint-stock association, headed by Lewis Selye, who undertook to raise a capital of \$100,000 in 1835, began the manufacture of railroad cars, fire engines, and eventually locomotives and other machinery for the expanding industries of the area.<sup>34</sup>

Considerable ingenuity was revealed in the economic developments of the period. Some forty inventions by local mechanics were registered in the patent office before 1837. Thus the problems of weighing canal boats, propelling them by steam, threshing and mashing grain, pumping water, preserving hides, and pegging shoes, all received attention, while a locally-invented stump extractor, marketed at \$75, gained wide use in the area.<sup>35</sup> Rochester editors, particularly those of the *Genesee*

<sup>29</sup> O'Reilly, *Rochester in 1835*, pp. 6-9; [Michael H. Jenks], "Notes of a Tour Through the Western Part of the State of New York, 1829-30," *The Ariel*, 1829-30.

<sup>30</sup> O'Reilly, *Rochester in 1835*, pp. 6-9; *Genesee Farmer*, V (1835), 79.

<sup>31</sup> *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine*, XVI (1847), 104-105; N. Y. *Census* (1835); *Monthly Genesee Farmer*, III (1838), 60.

<sup>32</sup> Henry O'Reilly, "Rochester at the End of 1836," *Democrat*, Jan. 4, 1837; *Rochester Directory* (1838).

<sup>33</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 22, 1835; Apr. 1, 1840.

<sup>34</sup> MS, Everard Peck folder, Autograph Letters.

<sup>35</sup> *Rochester Post Express*, Jan. 29, 1894; see Osgood Collection, MSS, III, No. 65. Roch. Hist. Soc., for a list of 65 early inventions patented from western New York; A. D. Jennings, MSS.



*Farmer*, gave frequent advice to farmers on crop rotation, the use of fertilizers, and the merits of varied root and horticultural crops.<sup>36</sup> A seed store and several small nurseries appeared in the mid-thirties. After the demise of a Monroe County Horticultural Society, which held several annual fairs in the city, a Genesee Valley Horticultural Society, organized in 1839, carried on the effort to develop the area's resources.<sup>37</sup>

Agitation for improved labor conditions likewise appeared. The desire of workmen for a standardized ten-hour day was voiced by the Journeymen Carpenters and Joiners Society and by the Journeymen Masons, who argued that the system had already been adopted in Troy, Utica, and Buffalo. But a Builders' Association successfully resisted the demand, contending that the short winter days compensated for the longer hours demanded in summer.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile a Cooper Union Society sought to protect its local market by warning fellow craftsmen elsewhere that the output of Rochester barrel factories had already depressed local wages.<sup>39</sup>

The constant stream of immigrants and migrating Americans made an organized stand for either wages or hours extremely difficult. Standards were more dependent upon the balance between supply and demand. Thus, farmers in the vicinity could get workmen for eight or twelve dollars a month and their keep, except during the harvest season when a dollar or more a day was demanded. But it proved hard to hold such helpers. In the city or on the canal, when a job had to be completed quickly or steady labor was necessary, wages sometimes reached \$1.25 or better a day. Clerks with some responsibilities could expect \$400 to \$500 a year, and regular male teachers about the same.<sup>40</sup>

Among the sixteen principal cities, Rochester afforded employment to 20 per cent of its citizens, well above the average, particularly in industry and trade. Clerking became a major occupation as the stores exceeded two hundred by the end of the decade, representing an investment comparable to that in industry.<sup>41</sup> Manufacturing and trade together employed 2916 persons; commerce and navigation, 759; and agriculture, 236 within the city limits.<sup>42</sup> Mercantile and industrial establishments lined Buffalo, Exchange, State, Front, and Main streets or crowded about the millraces and canal basins.<sup>43</sup> Stumps still dotted the

<sup>36</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, IV (1834), 41; VII (1837), 247; IX (1839), 31.

<sup>37</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, IX:26; Blake McKelvey, "The Flower City," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 125-130.

<sup>38</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 9, 1833; Jan. 17, 1835; *Democrat*, Apr. 18, 1834; Mar. 9, Apr. 30, 1835.

<sup>39</sup> *Republican*, July 26, 1836.

<sup>40</sup> Ephraim Lacy, "Lacy Farm Account Book" (Caledonia, 1849-1852), MS, Roch. Pub. Lib.; *Advertiser*, Apr. 2, June 28, 1844.

<sup>41</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, IV (1841), 484-485; N. Y. *Census* (1845).

<sup>42</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, VII (1842), 339. <sup>43</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1835).

cleared fields on the outskirts, but ambitious "improvements" received the attention of William A. Reynolds, the Schermerhorn and the McCracken brothers, Colonel Ashbel Riley, and young Josiah W. Bissell,<sup>44</sup> as well as most of the earlier promoters. Except for James S. Wadsworth, Charles Perkins, and John Greig, who now began the development of subdivisions, practically all of the realtors were personally resident at Rochester so that a major portion of the profits derived from the rising lot values remained in the city; further stimulating its growth. A brisk sale of city lots continued through 1836, including business locations and water-power rights as well as home sites—a sure sign of the town's prosperity.<sup>45</sup>



The one factor which never appeared sufficient to meet the needs of the community was its bank credit. The experience of those who incorporated the Rochester City Bank in 1836 matched that of the two earlier banks, when the capitalization, fixed at \$400,000, was oversubscribed fivefold,<sup>46</sup> yet the application for a mechanics bank was again rejected, compelling Rochester to stretch its banking capital of \$1,050,000 a long way.<sup>47</sup> Fortunately the canal board continued to deposit between \$200,000 and \$300,000 annually in local banks.<sup>48</sup> Eastern capitalists, notably John Jacob Astor, extended credit which frequently reached considerable proportions. The New York Life Insurance Company loaned over \$100,000 on bonds and mortgages in Monroe County during 1835 and \$213,063 on other terms,<sup>49</sup> while the organization by Levi A. Ward and Jacob Gould of the Monroe County Mutual Insurance Company in 1836 provided an additional credit source.<sup>50</sup> The small individual savings deposited in the Rochester Savings Bank totalled \$100,000 in 1835.<sup>51</sup> When distribution of the surplus treasury funds by the federal government was finally handed on to the counties by New York State in January, 1837, Monroe got \$142,976.81 as its share.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, VI (1836), 79; Benjamin Barton Letters, MSS, Univ. Roch.; "James Wadsworth," *D. A. B.*, XIX, 308-309. See the extent of the undeveloped subdivisions laid out on the map of 1833.

<sup>45</sup> *Republican*, Jan. 12, Sept. 6, 13, 20, 1836; Charles Perkins Papers, MSS, R. P. L. See also the "Greig Papers," MSS, in the hands of George Skivington, Scottsville, N. Y., and Neil A. McNall's "James S. Wadsworth," MS, Cornell Univ.

<sup>46</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 14, 1835; Mar. 15, June 3, 28, 1836; *Republican*, July 5, 1836.

<sup>47</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1834), pp. 11, 59; *Assembly Doc.* (1836), No. 66; *Republican*, Feb. 16, 1836.

<sup>48</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1836), No. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Abelard Reynolds' bond to John Jacob Astor, Feb. 10, 1835, for \$25,000, MS, Autograph Letters; *Assembly Doc.* (1835), No. 284.

<sup>50</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1836), pp. 187, 545; *Senate Journal* (1836), p. 247; *Republican*, Mar. 20, 1838.

<sup>51</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 8, 1836.

<sup>52</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 17, 1837.

Despite constant complaint that these facilities were inadequate for the city's needs,<sup>53</sup> many Rochesterians could not resist the temptation to use some of their funds in distant speculations. Abelard Reynolds, whose Arcade and other local investments had proved so fortunate, was caught up by dreams of a vast fortune and joined with an old New England friend located at Utica in two ambitious projects in the mid-thirties. A considerable amount of Rochester and Utica capital was thus sunk in a Maine land speculation and the Hinsdale town-site promotion, which burst like many another glossy bubble when the expected transport facilities—in the latter case the Genesee Valley Canal and the Erie Railroad—were diverted.<sup>54</sup> But the misfortunes of Reynolds and his friends were matched by those of investors throughout the country in 1837 as gloomy reports came in from all sides.

#### YEARS OF ADVERSITY: 1837-1843

The panic of 1837 and the depression which followed were national and international in scope, and though Rochester experienced numerous hardships, its suffering was not as grievous as that of Buffalo and many another city.<sup>55</sup> It soon became apparent that Rochester had profited by the earlier check in 1829.<sup>56</sup> The healthy revival of the mid-thirties had not yet burst the bounds of reason. Except for a few overventuresome individuals and the half dozen who joined the Reynolds speculations, Rochesterians escaped the worst effects of the early years of the depression. However, as deflation and gloom persisted, many at first able to back water were eventually drawn over the falls. The rapid succession of two protracted periods of hard times helped to transform the fearless "Young Lion of the West" of the twenties into the more cautious if more stable city of the late forties.

The financial crisis of the early spring of 1837 found Rochester banks in a fairly secure position. A state investigation failed to find any fault in the management of the Bank of Rochester, and while the president and cashier of the Bank of Monroe were reproved for purchasing paper at a discount with funds borrowed from their bank, the institution itself proved to be sound and well managed.<sup>57</sup> Early reports of bank difficulties elsewhere were greeted as political grievances against Van Buren's fiscal policies. Public meetings, assembled in Rochester to agitate for the safety fund banking amendment then before the legislature, voiced strong objections to the suggestion that stockholders be held to

<sup>53</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 12, Mar. 3, 1837.

<sup>54</sup> Reynolds Papers, 1834-1840, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>55</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 3, May 20, 29, 1837.

<sup>56</sup> *Republican*, May 2, 1837.

<sup>57</sup> Extracts from the "Report of the Bank Investigating Committee," *Democrat*, June 6, 1837.

full liability.<sup>58</sup> Local Whigs rivaled their fellows elsewhere in damning the Specie Circular as the principal cause of the country's woes.<sup>59</sup>

But, as word of failures in New Orleans, Buffalo, New York, and London arrived in quick succession, it became evident that a disaster of major proportions—not simply a political crisis—was in the offing.<sup>60</sup> Despite an attempt to exploit the crisis for political ends, a large public meeting, convened by representative Democrats and Whigs acting together, expressed nonpartisan concern that steps should be taken to restore confidence in the currency composed chiefly of bank notes.<sup>61</sup> That the difficulty was not simply an evidence of divine wrath appeared certain on the arrival of “astounding” news from New York of Arthur Tappan’s failure.<sup>62</sup> The legislature hastily concluded its long debate over banking policy and passed the revised Safety Fund Banking Act.<sup>63</sup> A sense of relief developed when news arrived of a general suspension of specie payments in New York and Buffalo. Rochester banks quickly followed suit, while the state legislature acted to remove the danger of a loss of bank charters through such action.<sup>64</sup> Many a nervous chuckle must have been heard in the crowded taverns of Rochester over the comforting advice from New York that if the country really was bankrupt it could take the benefit of the act and cheat John Bull out of “one hundred million” and then set to work devising ways to go on again.<sup>65</sup>

Unfortunately, the financial difficulties were not to be so easily rectified, while commercial stagnation soon loomed as a still greater evil. A group of responsible merchants expressed confidence in the Rochester banks, thus helping to allay fears of their collapse, but scant relief was provided to those seeking currency or credit.<sup>66</sup> The sale of Genesee Valley Canal stock attracted few buyers, bringing work on the project to a temporary halt.<sup>67</sup> Forwarders began laying up their boats, boat-yards closed down, and orders for wheat were cancelled.<sup>68</sup> Edwin Scrantom found plenty of time between customers at his recently opened dry goods store to confide to his diary on May 16: “Difficulties thicken and prospects darken. We anticipate new horrors.” The next day brought “Ditto, Ditto, Ditto” from the despondent storekeeper. The

<sup>58</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 2, 3, 7, 1837.

<sup>59</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 6, 1837.

<sup>60</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 27, Apr. 3, 1837; Chaddock, *Safety Fund Banking System*, pp. 292–309.

<sup>61</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 26, 27, 28, 1837.

<sup>62</sup> Edwin Scrantom, *Diary*, May 5, 1837, MS, *Roch. Hist. Soc.*

<sup>63</sup> *Democrat*, May 6, 1837.

<sup>64</sup> *Democrat*, May 9, 13, 1837; E. Scrantom, *Diary*, May 12, 13, 1837.

<sup>65</sup> *Democrat* (Extra), May 12, 1837.

<sup>66</sup> *Democrat*, May 15, 1837.

<sup>67</sup> *Democrat*, May 15, 1837.

<sup>68</sup> *Democrat*, May 4, 1837; Freeman Clarke Letters (1837), MSS, in hands of Mrs. Buell Mills of Rochester.

succeeding entry contained a bitter attack on Van Buren as the principal cause for the nation's misfortunes, but when a month passed without a local failure, additional and less personal causes were suggested. Overspeculation in Maine, Michigan, and other wild lands, in shipping lines and similar ventures, was blamed, as well as the government, and the crop failure in the South appeared as a serious misfortune for that area, though consolation was found for Rochester in the prospect of higher flour prices.<sup>69</sup>



Indeed, after the first period of uncertainty, prospects in Rochester began to brighten. Flour prices in New York mounted sharply until they exceeded ten dollars a barrel, returning handsome profits to local millers. As the canal trade recovered from its summer slump, city flour shipments that fall exceeded all previous figures.<sup>70</sup> The loss of a portion of the Rochester product, when two huge storehouses in New York were broken open and the barrels emptied into the streets by hungry flour rioters, dealt a severe blow to a few millers, but the prospect of larger gains the following year diverted public attention.<sup>71</sup> Hervey Ely, owner of the leading mill, declared "there is room for as much again more" milling in Rochester. The failure of a large dry goods store, operated by two "Scotch sharpers," afforded joy to Edwin Scrantom, while two other failures, one a "theatregoer" and one a "cheat," brought little sorrow to their competitor.<sup>72</sup> Despite the suspension of specie payments, eighty Rochester firms agreed to accept local bank notes at par, and the shortage in small notes was alleviated when the common council issued \$10,000 in small notes or shinplasters,<sup>73</sup> paid out for labor on the streets by the heads of some three hundred needy families.<sup>74</sup> Construction work on the Genesee Valley Canal and the two railroads eased the pressure of unemployment, though the steady stream of westward migrants left no available job empty for long.<sup>75</sup> Mixed feelings greeted the decline in trade union activity, while an unorganized strike of Genesee Canal workmen against wages of 75 cents for labor from sun to sun was quickly defeated.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>69</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, May 2-June 2, 1837.

<sup>70</sup> *Roch. Republican*, July 1, Nov. 4, 1837. See the varied tables showing fluctuations in commodity prices during these years, Walter B. Smith and A. H. Cole, *Fluctuations in American Business: 1790-1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), pp. 63-64, *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. \*365.

<sup>72</sup> Elisabeth S. Spencer to Captain Eaton, Rochester, Dec. 8, 1837, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; E. Scrantom, Diary, July 12, Oct. 24, 1837.

<sup>73</sup> *Democrat*, May 15, 23, June 6, 1837.

<sup>74</sup> *Democrat*, June 15, 20, 1837; see below, p. 244.

<sup>75</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, VII, 118; *Democrat*, May 31, 1837.

<sup>76</sup> *Democrat*, June 24, 28, July 1, 4, 1837; Allan Gleason, "The History of Labor in Rochester to 1884," p. 5, M. A. thesis, Univ. Roch.

A series of unfortunate events added to Rochester's hardships that year. When the Genesee jumped its banks in March and again in October, inflicting considerable damage, the great flood of two years before was recalled, depressing the spirits of those who had endeavored to dismiss the constant flood danger as but a rare experience.<sup>77</sup> Among several destructive fires, one leveled most of the stores in an entire block and narrowly missed Scrantom's establishment, while another burned out upwards of sixteen separate shops housed in the Globe Building.<sup>78</sup> The activity of a group of land sharpers, promoting a town site, named Ontario, on the east bank of the river at its mouth, and selling lots with water-power rights and other advantages sadly lacking on the marshy plot, disappointed several Philadelphia buyers and gave Rochester a bad name in the East.<sup>79</sup> Finally, the arrival of ninety destitute Norwegian immigrants just before the canal closed that winter crowded the home of Lars Larson and seriously taxed his ability to find shelter and jobs for his countrymen, though several proved useful in the Larson boat-yard.<sup>80</sup>

Rochester hastened to put the depression behind. Local merchants, leading in the call for a bank convention in the fall of 1837, sent frequent petitions to Albany, demanding repeal of the law which authorized the suspension of specie.<sup>81</sup> Rochester banks were among the first to resume payment in April, 1838.<sup>82</sup> Action promptly followed, seeking the extension of the Bank of Rochester charter and the establishment of new banks, but the legislature was absorbed in debate over the free banking measure of 1838, which sought to break the monopoly enjoyed by incorporated banks.<sup>83</sup> When finally adopted, that law, discarding many of the safety fund principles, prescribed simplified procedures for the organization of new banks.<sup>84</sup> The Bank of Western New York was promptly established in August with stock to the amount of \$295,000 subscribed, but the first large operation, in the bonds of a Georgia lumber company, proved an unfortunate speculation, as events later disclosed.<sup>85</sup> Continued efforts to expand the city's credit facilities led to the extension of the Bank of Rochester charter in

<sup>77</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, V, 384; *Democrat*, Mar. 15, Oct. 23, 27, 1837.

<sup>78</sup> E. Scrantom, *Diary*, June 11, 1837; *Republican*, June 20, 1837.

<sup>79</sup> *Democrat*, June 6, 1837; Peck Scrapbook, p. 3, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>80</sup> Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America to 1860* (Northfield, Minn., 1931), pp. 107-108, 203. Dean Blegen cites three letters written from Rochester and other first-hand accounts of this migration.

<sup>81</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1838), pp. 126, 747; *Republican*, Nov. 21, Dec. 12, 1837.

<sup>82</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 10, 1838.

<sup>83</sup> *Senate Doc.* (1838), No. 44; *Assembly Journal* (1838), p. 360; *Republican*, Apr. 2, May 7, 1839.

<sup>84</sup> Chaddock, *Safety Fund Banking System*, pp. 369-386.

<sup>85</sup> Ely vs. Sprague et al., *Clarke's Chancery Reports*, I, 351-357; L. A. Ward to Freeman Clarke, Rochester, Sept. 15, 1838, Clarke Letters.

1839 and the establishment of three additional free banks in that and the succeeding year: the Commercial Bank, the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank, and the Exchange Bank.<sup>86</sup>

Unfortunately, Rochester's speedy revival in 1838 was premature. When Scrantom and his partner, amazed at the profits shown by an inventory in March, 1838, decided to tear down their old store and rebuild a four-story exchange, the end of the year brought serious embarrassment. Though Edwin gathered fifteen guests around his Thanksgiving table that November, and subscribed for \$1000 of the new Commercial Bank's stock, the January inventory caused alarm. With affairs in such an involved state that the partners could not settle up, their creditors proved reluctant to foreclose. The only alternative was to carry on, prompting Edwin to borrow from his friend, Shakespeare, for a diary entry: "That either makes us or foredooms us quite." The partners gained a new appreciation of the treacherous character of the circulating medium, which consisted of depreciated Michigan and Canadian paper, worth possibly 25 per cent, Eastern bank notes of varied merits, and the personal notes of their neighbors, hard either to refuse or to redeem. The end of the year found "business dull, dull, dull," and Scrantom added, "Let the world wag." The partners secured another extension of their loans but determined this time to add no additional stock.<sup>87</sup>

Many were much less fortunate. The unusual prices received for flour in 1837 started a boom in wheat, afflicting millers and forwarders who bought at high prices with huge losses when flour tumbled from \$11 to \$4.50 a barrel in little more than a year. Though the quantity of flour reaching the Hudson over the Erie increased between 1837 and 1839, the value dropped from \$8,456,082 to \$6,451,919.<sup>88</sup> In the face of such rapid fluctuations it was not long before many of the leaders were humbled. Jonathan Child, the first mayor, and Charles J. Hill, soon to be elected to that office, both suffered huge losses in 1839.<sup>89</sup> The number of foreclosure proceedings begun in 1838 and 1839 totaled 311,<sup>90</sup> while many of the less substantial simply became "runaways," possibly taking a few hundred in cash secured from their latest creditors.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine*, IV (1841), 476-479.

<sup>87</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, Mar. 20, Apr. 14, May 19, Nov. 29, Dec. 8, 1838; Jan. 4-12, 18, Nov. 18, 1839; Feb. 8, 18, 1840.

<sup>88</sup> *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine*, XIII (1845), 290; XV (1846), 520; XVIII (1848), 223.

<sup>89</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, Nov. 18, Dec. 28, 1839; Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Dec. 25, 1839, Feb. 1, 1840, E. S. S. Eaton Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Elizabeth Selden Rogers, New York City.

<sup>90</sup> Les Pendency Cases, Chancery Records, A & B, Monroe Co. Court House.

<sup>91</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, Nov. 18, Dec. 15, 1839; O'Reilly Doc. No. 1778, Roch. Hist. Soc.

Amidst the gloom of the early forties, the depression provided a disillusioning experience. Confidence in one's neighbors was shaken, and "a scheming, gain-pursuing spirit" appeared.<sup>92</sup> It frequently occurred that close associates did not hesitate to make sharp bargains at one another's expense, as when Abraham Schermerhorn forced an early foreclosure of the Eagle Tavern in 1839, acquiring that valuable site and principal hotel for \$700 above the mortgage of \$50,000, although another interested party, then absent from the city, offered \$6,000 when asking for a resale.<sup>93</sup> One man's loss in such a situation provided another's gain. Indeed it soon appeared to Edwin Scrantom that the only prosperous business was that of auctioneer, selling out his neighbors' estates for a commission.<sup>94</sup>

The successive months of 1841 were full of gloom in Rochester. A blow-up occurred in the City Bank that summer, resulting in the ouster of the president and cashier on charges of misuse of funds, while the Bank of Western New York closed when its losses in Georgia lumber were revealed.<sup>95</sup> The Commercial Bank, checked in its attempt to operate on non-liquid assets, successfully held its head above water,<sup>96</sup> but the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank, with a capital of \$100,000, of which only one-quarter was paid in, succumbed early in 1842.<sup>97</sup> Business failures totaled more than \$150,000 in 1841,<sup>98</sup> turning the public interest from bank charters to bankruptcy legislation and proposals for a stable currency.<sup>99</sup>



Many other factors contributed to Rochester's hardships. From the start of the crisis the citizens had turned to government both for aid to the destitute and a reduction of taxes, though of course neither demand was fully satisfied. Delay in the completion of transport improvements joined with fire and flood losses to prolong the town's economic suffering.

Poor relief had been supplied by the townships prior to 1837 when the council voted its first hundred dollars for a soup kitchen. The extensive program of street paving, launched a few years before, was continued with the hope that unemployment would be eased thereby. Though seventy citizens petitioned that all public improvements in the

<sup>92</sup> [J. B. Hudson], *Narrative of the Christian Experience*, p. 164.

<sup>93</sup> Gardiner vs. Schermerhorn et al., *Clarke's Chancery Reports*, I, 101-106.

<sup>94</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, July 20, 1840-Aug. 13, 1844; P. Canfield, "Cash Book," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc., records several foreclosure sales of 1842 and 1843.

<sup>95</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, June 13, 1841-Jan. 29, 1842; *Democrat*, Mar. 16, 17, Apr. 8, 1841.

<sup>96</sup> Ely vs. Sprague et al., *Clarke's Chancery Reports*, I, 351-357.

<sup>97</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, Jan. 29, 1842; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, VI (1842), 481.

<sup>98</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 7, 1841.

<sup>99</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 22, 1840; July 19, 1841.



city be suspended and the taxes reduced, an opposing memorial stressed the commercial necessity for improving the main highways leading into the city and urged the merits of a penal workhouse where young criminals could be taught industry and led to reform.<sup>100</sup> After much hesitation the council sold stock for an almshouse, spending the money on other improvements, however. Some rock was broken for the streets, and the steep hill at the east end of the main bridge was partially graded down. Direct relief aided as many as 327 families, totaling 1,389 persons, 1,064 of them foreigners, in 1839-40, though the sums distributed averaged barely five dollars a person for the entire year.<sup>101</sup>

Increasingly insistent demands for public economy finally called a halt to the mounting levies of the mid-thirties, but instead of cutting expenditures at the same rate, an ingenious plan was devised to pay for the improvements with small notes or shinplasters to be redeemed from the special assessments collected when the improvements were completed. By the end of 1837 a total of \$51,000 had been distributed in this fashion, and while some notes were redeemed the next year, more were issued, so that the close of 1840 found nearly \$52,000 in shinplasters outstanding.<sup>102</sup> A determined effort to redeem these notes in the next two years sharply contracted the circulating medium on which the trading community depended, increasing the reliance on due bills issued by private employers. Meanwhile, despite the economy pledges of its officials and despite the publication in 1843 of a five-column list of properties to be sold for delinquent taxes, the city still faced a floating debt of approximately \$40,000 in 1844.<sup>103</sup>

A similar struggle for economy developed in the legislature with more disastrous effects on Rochester, which stood to benefit from the major state outlays of the period. Indeed the work on the aqueduct and the Genesee Valley Canal between 1837 and 1842 helped greatly to moderate the local effects of the depression. Most Rochesterians favored an energetic prosecution of these public works,<sup>104</sup> but eastern Democrats urged retrenchment and sought to curb the powers of the Whig administration of Governor Seward to borrow for canal improvements. Fortunately the new aqueduct had been completed before the economy party gained ascendancy, stopping all further construction in March, 1842. Not only was the annual expenditure of several hundred thousand

<sup>100</sup> Donald W. Gilbert, "Government and Finances of Rochester," MS, Univ. Roch., pp. 67, 87-94; Common Council *Proceedings*, Apr. 17, 1838; Economy Committee Report, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>101</sup> Gilbert, "Government and Finances," pp. 90-94; see below, p. 255.

<sup>102</sup> *Democrat*, May 15, 1837; Feb. 27, 1841; Gilbert, "Government and Finances," pp. 153-155.

<sup>103</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 25, 1843; *Democrat*, Feb. 19, 29, 1844.

<sup>104</sup> Senate Doc. (1838), No. 1; O'Reilly Doc., Case III, Box 1; Hervey Ely to Thurlow Weed, Rochester, Apr. 1, 1841, Weed Letters.

dollars in Rochester and the Genesee Country discontinued, but the expected trade advantages were postponed. The severity of the recession in Rochester during 1842 and 1843 no doubt reflected the drastic economy efforts at Albany.<sup>105</sup>

A series of natural events conspired to add to the city's misfortunes. More than a score of destructive fires broke out in 1840 and again in 1842, while the number doubled in 1843, when the activity of an incendiary was suspected. With a considerable portion of the milling and other industrial equipment thus destroyed, residents began to question the wisdom of economy in the fire department.<sup>106</sup> Meanwhile the long series of bumper crops in the Genesee came to an end during the severe drought of 1841.<sup>107</sup> The snow storms of the next winter broke all previous records for the depth of their drifts and the duration of bad weather, but the following winter promptly established a new record, recalling the snowbound winters of Vermont and enforcing long seasons of business stagnation.<sup>108</sup>

Warm summer evenings had peculiar hazards of their own. The protracted depression, with its reduced wages, prolonged working hours, and renewal of the due-bill system, had revived labor agitation, and the Court House Square afforded a convenient setting for these activities. When the Mechanics Benevolent Association held a mass meeting there in March, 1842, the Journeymen Cordwainers' Society coöperated in the parade which followed, carrying posters roundly condemning due bills.<sup>109</sup> Though popular sympathy was aroused, the practice continued, prompting a second mass meeting on the evening of June 14, 1843.<sup>110</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn, realtor, looking down from his comfortable hotel suite across Buffalo Street, feared that the mob of two or three thousand would get out of hand and start wrecking the town. The shout of "fire, fire," coming through the open window as he sat writing to his wife, added to his concern.

It was only a few months since Hervey Ely, the miller, had lost his Greek Revival mansion on Livingston Park, and the homes of James K. Livingston and Selah Mathews, two of Ely's endorsers, were likewise sacrificed. Several other mansions changed hands that year,<sup>111</sup> but

<sup>105</sup> Nelson J. Beach, *Who Built the Canals?* (Rome, 1852); Samuel B. Ruggles, *Vindication in 1849 of the Canal Policy of New York of 1838* (New York, 1849); *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIII (1845), 58-59; Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, I, 167-172.

<sup>106</sup> Newspaper Index, Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>107</sup> *Rochester Evening Post*, Sept. 4, 1841.

<sup>108</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, Mar. 15-29, 1843.

<sup>109</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 22, 26, 1842.

<sup>110</sup> *Roch. Republican*, June 20, 1843.

<sup>111</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Jan. 17, June 14, 1843, Schermerhorn Letters, MSS in possession of Mrs. Rudolph Stanley-Brown, Washington, D. C., photostat copies in Roch. Pub. Library.

Mrs. Ely was able to "appear happy" in less pretentious quarters in Mumford's Block, assisting her husband in the slow struggle to recoup his fortune, while J. M. Schermerhorn, encouraged the next spring by finding "business much improved," determined to build some more cheap houses on the Reynolds tract (which had recently fallen to him through Abelard's embarrassment) for quick sale to the newcomers expected to arrive that summer.<sup>112</sup>

#### THE UPHILL ROAD TO RECOVERY: 1840-1850

As the depression was primarily a financial panic with far-reaching commercial repercussions,<sup>113</sup> Rochester with its fairly secure banks could hope for recovery as soon as the commercial life of the nation regained its vitality. Persistent efforts to improve the local trade arteries achieved some results, but it soon became evident that Rochester's future lay in its industrial potentialities.<sup>114</sup> A concerted drive for their development first appeared in the late forties.

Meanwhile, several of Rochester's ablest leaders sought the improvement of transport facilities. Not only were such men as Henry O'Reilly and Hervey Ely prominent in the fight for the canal's enlargement, but Jonathan Child, James Seymour, and Abraham Schermerhorn invested heavily in railroad ventures, while Elisha Johnson, the engineer, took an active part in several of these enterprises. After building the Tonawanda and assisting in the formulation of plans for other railroads in the area, Johnson became a construction engineer on the Genesee Valley Canal, assuming the difficult task of extending that artery over the highlands south of Mount Morris. Unfortunately, the major difficulties encountered, together with the withdrawal of state support, brought this latter project to a standstill, prompting Johnson, like many of his fellow Rochesterians of the early forties, to seek a new fortune in more distant ventures.<sup>115</sup>

The Erie Canal, despite the disappointment of those who advocated its early enlargement, was still Rochester's major trade artery. While its commercial burden fluctuated from year to year, the upward trend continued, particularly for eastbound produce, which increased twofold during the forties. Cargoes hailing from the West increased rapidly and, after 1846, greatly exceeded the state's produce in tonnage;<sup>116</sup> western

<sup>112</sup> Same to same, *loc. cit.*, Nov. 7, 1843; May 14, 1844.

<sup>113</sup> Reginald C. McGrane, *The Panic of 1837* (Chicago, 1924).

<sup>114</sup> Michel Chevalier, *Histoire et Description des Voies de Communication aux Etats-Unis* (Paris, 1840), pp. 13-14.

<sup>115</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 30, 1834; *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 24, Apr. 18, 1837; *Rochester Union and Advertiser*, June 30, 1866.

<sup>116</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, IV (1841), 481-482; XXVII (1852), 115; XXXV (1856), p. 359.

wheat surpassed New York's in tonnage by 1841.<sup>117</sup> These years also witnessed a proportionate decrease in the number of packets and line boats with facilities for carrying passengers, as compared with the number of scows and other freight boats. From one-half, the former fell to one-fifth of the total number of boats within ten years.<sup>118</sup> Boat cargoes increased from an average of 41 tons in 1841 to 49 tons in 1844 and to 76 by the mid-century, reflecting the shift to the heavier freight boats.<sup>119</sup>

Rochester continued to enjoy a large share of this trade. The completion of the imposing new aqueduct at a cost of \$445,347 in 1842 provided the city with a secure two-way crossing.<sup>120</sup> Fortunately the deeper cut and improved locks at Lockport were likewise completed after a short delay, facilitating a more adequate flow of Lake Erie water to and beyond Rochester and postponing for a time the danger that Genesee water would have to be diverted from the mills in order to keep the canal supplied.<sup>121</sup> The prospect that the western end of the canal would fall into disuse and that east- and westbound traffic would be diverted by way of Lake Ontario and the Oswego Canal was thus avoided, although the latter route's portion of the total trade did increase.<sup>122</sup>

Rochester successfully preserved its vital trade artery, but rapid shifts marked the development of its trade. Local canal tolls, after hitting an all-time high of \$248,210 in 1840, fell off in succeeding years as toll rates were reduced, while Buffalo's through shipments increased and her tolls climbed rapidly until they more than doubled the Rochester receipts after 1844.<sup>123</sup> Shipments by the canal fluctuated sharply in both size and value. From the relatively high figures for 1837, when the 45,288 tons shipped east reached a value of \$3,518,335, the trade dropped irregularly to 42,415 tons in 1844, valued at only \$2,024,449—largely because of the sharply reduced flour prices. Buffalo's trade experienced a twofold growth during the same period and continued to increase its lead over Rochester, while Oswego bounded past, but shipping figures at these rival ports represented transshipments, whereas those of Rochester measured the output of the mills and in the late forties the augmented factory product as well. Thus, while ashes fell to a fifth of their 1837 value by the mid-century, and flour barely held its own, Rochester's

<sup>117</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXVIII (1853), 481.

<sup>118</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XI (1844), 142. The total number of canal boats in the state in 1844 was given as 2,126, with 40 per cent of them classified as undecked scows and the total valuation placed at \$1,526,000.

<sup>119</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXVII, 115.

<sup>120</sup> Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, 171, 960; *Democrat*, Apr. 5, 21, 1842.

<sup>121</sup> Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, p. 960.

<sup>122</sup> Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, p. 1062.

<sup>123</sup> Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, pp. 910, 1062, 1064; *Senate Doc.* (1845), No. 115, Stmt. 1; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XLII (1860), 118.

total advanced 30 per cent. After 1844 flour dropped from two-thirds to one-half of the total valuation.<sup>124</sup> But a still more noticeable shift occurred in the relation between shipments and landings, for by 1848 the latter showed an excess value of \$600,000, doubtless reflecting a gain in the city's merchandising activities in the interior.<sup>125</sup>

A contributing factor in Rochester's fluctuating canal trade was the sudden rise and fall in lake shipments. These reached a total of \$654,700 in 1841,<sup>126</sup> when the European demand for breadstuffs revived the Genesee's languishing exports, but dropped to a third of that figure by 1847.<sup>127</sup> The trade would increase, many argued, as soon as the abandoned Carthage railroad was replaced by a west-side steam line to the Charlotte docks, but construction was delayed for several years.<sup>128</sup> Occasional appeals for reciprocal trade with Canada ran counter to the more persistent desire for protective tariffs.<sup>129</sup> The arrival and departure of two steamers (and frequently an equal number of schooners) each weekday during the busy season in 1842 provided a lively activity<sup>130</sup> which continued from year to year, though the Genesee stop became relatively unimportant as the trade of Oswego and Sacketts Harbor, not to mention Buffalo and other western ports, greatly outstripped that of Rochester.<sup>131</sup>

The large commercial advantages expected from the Genesee Valley Canal never materialized, though traffic over this route did get under way when the first stretch of the canal opened to Mount Morris in September, 1840. Only fifty-two miles were completed when the Stop Law postponed further construction.<sup>132</sup> The canal, as it stood, served little more than the normal valley settlements which had formerly boated the river free of charge, but the expenditure of upwards of \$1,500,000 in the valley had greatly stimulated enterprise. The tonnage on the Genesee Canal increased from 26,892 in 1841 to 65,077 in 1844 and 89,804 in 1850, while the tolls mounted over the same period from \$9,927 to \$19,641 and \$27,675.<sup>133</sup> This trade averaged far below its anticipated volume, however, and although work resumed on the upper section in 1847, after a stoppage of five years, the prospect of reaching

<sup>124</sup> Senate Doc. (1838), No. 35, Stmt. 8; (1845), No. 115, Table 3; Assembly Doc. (1850), No. 140, Stmt. 3.

<sup>125</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 98.

<sup>126</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 4, 1841.

<sup>127</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVIII (1848), 491-492.

<sup>128</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 28, Dec. 4, 1841; Jan. 10, July 6, 1842; *Advertiser*, Jan. 18, 1843.

<sup>129</sup> *Republican*, May 17, 1842; Mar. 19, 26, July 2, 1844; *Democrat*, Oct. 25, 1849; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 27.

<sup>130</sup> *Democrat*, July 6, 1842; *Advertiser*, July 13, 1843.

<sup>131</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVIII (1848), 491-492; XXIV (1851), 217; J. L. Barton, *Commerce of the Lakes* (Buffalo, 1847).

<sup>132</sup> *Advertiser*, July 23, 1840; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIII (1845), 58-59.

<sup>133</sup> Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, pp. 1062, 1066.

the coal fields and tapping the trade of the Ohio Valley appeared far in the future.



Rochester's two main railroads proved less disappointing, chiefly because less was expected of them. The single-track Tonawanda line had been constructed with such economy that it soon closed for repairs. Though the road's receipts in 1839 totaled \$50,210, the major portion came from passengers, who increased markedly in 1843 when completion of the Attica and Buffalo Railway made the Tonawanda attractive to through travelers, sustaining a schedule of two trains daily.<sup>134</sup> Unfortunately the Buffalo line drained off much of Genesee County's produce, previously carried by the Tonawanda to Rochester, and no effective competition for the canal's freight developed for many years.<sup>135</sup>

Meanwhile, work on the Auburn line progressed rapidly. With a depot erected on Mill Street and a bridge thrown across the Genesee in 1839, the company was able with the aid of a state grant to reach Canandaigua in 1840 and Auburn the following year.<sup>136</sup> New England capital eagerly absorbed the forfeited local stock<sup>137</sup> when the cost of the full 78 miles mounted to \$1,727,000, or \$22,141 per mile, more than double that of the Tonawanda but slightly under the average for New York railroads of the day.<sup>138</sup> Again, the passenger service attracted chief attention, 90 per cent of the revenue of 1843-44 coming from that source.<sup>139</sup> Indeed the merchants of Canandaigua found it necessary to convene a public meeting and circulate petitions in order to persuade the Auburn and Rochester to run one freight train a week in 1841.<sup>140</sup>

The two Rochester lines became useful links in the chain of railroads stretching across the state in these years. With the Auburn line finished, rail connections extended over these several lines from Albany to Rochester and on to Batavia, and to Buffalo by January, 1843. Barring accidents, it was theoretically possible to reach New York in a day and a night from Rochester by rail and Hudson River steamer, a trip previously made with good luck in a week.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>134</sup> *Advertiser*, Feb. 21, Apr. 28, 1840; *Democrat*, May 7, 1841; Apr. 27, July 1, 1842; Jan. 17, 1843; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, IX (1843), 482.

<sup>135</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, IX (1843), 482.

<sup>136</sup> *Roch. Republican*, May 14, July 16, Aug. 13, 1839; *Democrat*, Aug. 3, 28, 1839; *Advertiser*, Apr. 13, 30, June 15, Sept. 11, 1840, Nov. 4, 1841; *Hungerford, Men and Iron*, pp. 48-55.

<sup>137</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 1, 1848.

<sup>138</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, X (1844), 476-477.

<sup>139</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XII (1845), 382.

<sup>140</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 19, Dec. 4, 1841; Albert Lester to Henry O'Reilly, Canandaigua, Dec. 1, 1841, O'Reilly Doc., No. 1260.

<sup>141</sup> Abelard Reynolds to Fabritus Reynolds, Rochester, Sept. 10, 1841, Reynolds Papers.

However, the various companies, supported in considerable measure by local capital, felt little disposed to facilitate such rapid travel. Hotelkeepers and merchants at Utica, Syracuse, and especially at Rochester desired schedules that would assure them an ample overnight clientele. Their injury would have been great indeed, had the speeding cars deprived them at one blow of the 50,000 through passengers a year which the stage lines had previously scattered along the route.<sup>142</sup> Yet the definite advantages to be gained through a mutual use of rolling stock prompted the Auburn and Rochester to make such an agreement with the Auburn and Syracuse in 1842. Two years later a more extensive pooling of the freight, passenger, mail, and "emigrant" cars was achieved by the five adjoining lines running between Rochester and Albany.<sup>143</sup> The latter year likewise saw the Tonawanda tracks extended despite many protests into the Mill Street station. An able engineer, Charles B. Stuart, undertook the reconstruction of this line in 1844, enabling it to carry the heavier cars and engines of the Eastern roads.<sup>144</sup>

While these several railroads as yet shared little of the area's heavy commerce, they exerted a considerable influence upon its economic life. Unprecedented opportunities for the profitable investment of private funds, far beyond the resources of the area, attracted new capital from the East, greatly stimulating the demand for labor and supplies. A new land use appeared, and the Auburn and Rochester paid out \$170,028 for its narrow right of way between 1837 and 1842.<sup>145</sup> When car and machine shops were demanded, Rochester hastened to supply them.<sup>146</sup>

The old stage companies, hard pressed, quickly abandoned the cross-state business. Their last-ditch fight to retain the mail contracts ended when the railroads provided cars in which the mail could be sorted en route.<sup>147</sup> Rochester, however, still enjoyed the services of six stage

<sup>142</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, X (1843), 476-477, XII (1845), 382.

<sup>143</sup> "Articles of Agreement between the Auburn and Rochester Railway and the Auburn and Syracuse Railway respecting the joint use of certain properties, April 19, 1842"; "Articles of Agreement between the Auburn and Rochester, the Auburn and Syracuse, the Syracuse and Utica, the Utica and Schenectady, and the Mohawk and Hudson Railway companies for the joint use of freight, passenger, mail and emigrant cars, 1844," MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>144</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 1, 5, Apr. 30, Nov. 18, 1844; Charles B. Stuart, "Report on the Tonawanda Rail Road, Sept. 27, 1843," *Stuart's Railroad Reports* (New York, 1852).

<sup>145</sup> "Statement of Disbursements of the Auburn and Rochester Railway to Jan. 1, 1842," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XI (1844), 76-77, 172; *Democrat*, May 7, 1841. The early railroad dividends were usually 7 per cent per annum.

<sup>146</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XII (1845), 382.

<sup>147</sup> Henry B. Gibson to Henry O'Reilly, Canandaigua, Apr. 21, 1841, O'Reilly Doc., No. 856.

companies in 1844<sup>148</sup> as improved stage lines were extended north and south. The decrease in packet service on the canals closely reflected railroad competition, though the immigrant traffic was only partly lost. With the provision of more comfortable cars and coaches fitted with sleeping accommodation, the total number of travelers increased two-fold during the forties.<sup>149</sup> Fares received from the more than 150,000 passengers who passed through Rochester in 1849 provided handsome returns, enabling local railroads to pay dividends of 7 or 8 per cent annually.<sup>150</sup>

Nevertheless, the railroads appeared as modest enterprises when compared with the canal. The regular payroll of the Auburn and Rochester included thirteen names aside from the president in 1840, requiring a monthly outlay of but \$475. By 1844 the number of employees had increased to 137, reaching 287 by 1848, while the Tonawanda averaged 84 and 93 in the same years, not including construction labor.<sup>151</sup> These workmen, scattered in the various towns from Auburn to Batavia, operated a total of 25 locomotives and 150 freight and passenger cars in 1848—a small labor force indeed compared with the canallers who manned the 4,000-odd boats which made 7,262 visits to Rochester that year.<sup>152</sup> Scarcely 4,500 tons of freight were carried out of the city by railroad in 1846, when the canal boats loaded 100,803 tons.<sup>153</sup> The average canal season lasted only 225 days during these years, but the pioneer railroads likewise closed down for weeks at a time, notably during the heavy snows of 1842 and 1843, and for extensive repairs each spring.<sup>154</sup> Their prosperous months proved to be April through October when four-fifths of the receipts were gathered.<sup>155</sup>

Constant efforts to strengthen these early railroads somewhat improved their commercial facilities. Though the Tonawanda road bed was

<sup>148</sup> [Humphrey Phelps?], *Phelp's Travelers Guide through the United States* (New York, 1848), pp. 23-26.

<sup>149</sup> Ole Munch Raeder, *America in the Forties. The Letters of Ole Munch Raeder*, tr. and ed. by Gunnar J. Malmin (Minn., 1929), pp. 1-9; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXII (1850), 567.

<sup>150</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XX (1849), 550; XXII (1850), 567; *Democrat*, Apr. 12, Sept. 4, Oct. 13, 1848.

<sup>151</sup> "List of Persons necessary to operate the Auburn and Rochester Railway between Rochester and Canandaigua and their Salaries" [1840], MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XII (1845), 382; XX (1849), 550.

<sup>152</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XX (1849), 550; Whitfield, *History of the Canal System*, p. 961; "Weighlock Report," Raymond Scrapbook, p. 199. Yet the steady employment at \$1.25 a day enjoyed in the car repair shop, and especially the regularity of the payments, coming on the first day of every month without fail, impressed Charles Howland, a recent migrant from New England; see his letter, quoted in R. H. S., *Pub.*, XXI, 84-85.

<sup>153</sup> Senate Doc. (1847), No. 90, Stmt. 2.

<sup>154</sup> E. Scrantom, *Diary*, Mar. 23, 1843.

<sup>155</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XX (1849), 222.



rebuilt in the mid-forties, before the end of the decade its managers determined to replace the old strip-iron rails with the new T-rail already installed on the Auburn line at a cost of \$10,000 a mile and financed in part by a state loan of \$400,000.<sup>156</sup> The ten-mile-an-hour average speed, with an occasional spurt that reached fifteen, astonished local travelers of the early forties, but by the mid-century Rochesterians had become accustomed to speeds of from twenty to twenty-five miles an hour.<sup>157</sup> Freight engines hauling twenty-five cars occasionally pulled out of the city.<sup>158</sup> Though fatal accidents proved frequent—(trains jumped the tracks in the area at least twenty-one times during the forties),<sup>159</sup> the more normal mishap resulted from the blazing sparks scattered by the engines, which consumed some 23,000 cords of wood a year.<sup>160</sup> When complaints against the service increased, a local railroad guide advised travelers to "avoid all words of controversy with the Railroad Men, and do not give them any unnecessary trouble. Their duties are many times arduous and vexatious, and you may often find them out of humor. Should they misuse you, report them at the end of their Road."<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately there was no authority to appeal to when porters from rival hotels started fighting over a passenger's baggage at the depot on Mill Street. Harriet Beecher Stowe marveled in 1842 that passengers were not crushed daily in the crowds swarming around the cars with the engines puffing steam and sparks up under the high roof.<sup>162</sup>

Several other railroad projects interested the Flour City during the forties. A proposed direct line to Syracuse, feared by the canal interests and the Auburn line, failed to gain legislative approval until 1850.<sup>163</sup> Though a charter was secured for a railroad to Lockport, rivalry between the canal and Ridge Road routes delayed its construction until 1852.<sup>164</sup>

Still another railroad, the New York and Erie, was destined to have a considerable effect on Rochester's commercial position. Financial difficulties halted construction in 1842, but a few years later, when its

<sup>156</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 11, Oct. 3, 6, Nov. 27, 1848; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 91; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXI (1849), 167.

<sup>157</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXII, 568; Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America* (Indianapolis, 1915), III, 1051, 1054.

<sup>158</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 28, 1848.

<sup>159</sup> The Newspaper Index lists 32 fatalities during the forties and many less serious injuries.

<sup>160</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 69; *Democrat*, July 7, 8, 1842; Jan. 17, Sept. 6, 1843.

<sup>161</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 2, 1848; *Dewey's Albany and Buffalo Railway Handbook* (Rochester, 1849).

<sup>162</sup> *Genesee Ohio*, Nov. 4, 1848; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Boston, 1897), pp. 107-108.

<sup>163</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXI (1849), 163-171.

<sup>164</sup> Freeman Clarke Letters.

advance through the southern portion of the Flour City's hinterland recommenced, plans were laid to construct a line southward along the river with the hope of persuading the Erie to run its main line into Rochester. While the Avon line failed to achieve that purpose, the Erie completed its 445-mile line in 1851, the longest yet built in America, providing a southern connection between New York City and Lake Erie.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, despite the Erie's success in tapping a coal field and opening a vast area, the real commercial achievements of this and other railroads still lay in the future. Travelers from abroad were chiefly surprised at the flimsy construction of these New York railroads as compared with those of England and the continent.<sup>166</sup>



Rochester's failure to achieve major improvements in its commercial facilities proved a severe handicap in the race with more advantageously located cities. The new railroads, however, strengthened its position of leadership in the northern portion of the Genesee Country, and while many of its citizens, discouraged by the protracted hardships of the depression, moved on, a sufficient number of newcomers arrived to give Rochester a 92 per cent growth in the ten years following its incorporation and an 80 per cent growth during the forties. The most rapid increase came in the years prior to the depression, yet nearly one thousand arrived during each of the seven lean years, and growth was slightly accelerated in the late forties.<sup>167</sup>

Nevertheless, it seemed clear to a hasty observer in 1843, J. W. Scott, *Hunt's* authority on urban growth, that Rochester's palmy days had passed.<sup>168</sup> Smaller cities further west, such as Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Chicago, were experiencing Rochester's earlier boom days, and many of the latter's residents felt attracted by the expansive atmosphere they had known so well. Western cities of Rochester's class—Buffalo, Pittsburgh, and Louisville—and the two leaders, Cincinnati and St. Louis, recovering quickly from the sharp hardships of 1837, bounded far ahead, supported by the commercial opportunities at their respective docks.<sup>169</sup> Even Oswego appeared to Scott as destined to out-class Rochester, while Maumee (or Toledo) seemed to hold the greatest promise, with Chicago alone offering a challenge.<sup>170</sup> Rochester-

<sup>165</sup> C. R. Babbit to Henry O'Reilly, Painted Post, Aug. 16, 1841, O'Reilly Doc., No. 1729; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, X (1844), 562-563; E. H. Mott, *The Story of Erie* (New York, 1908), pp. 94-109, 483.

<sup>166</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, IX (1839), 322; Letter of German Immigrant (1848), *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Sept., 1937, pp. 72-73.

<sup>167</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 20, 1835; July 31, 1840; Nov. 1, 1850; *Advertiser*, Sept. 6, 1845.

<sup>168</sup> J. W. Scott, "Internal Trade of the United States," *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, IX (1843), 31-47. See also Raymond Scrapbook, p. 134.

<sup>169</sup> U. S. Census (1840), (1850).

<sup>170</sup> Scott, "Internal Trade," pp. 39-46. Other forecasts saw Cincinnati and

ians reluctantly gave up their proud title, "The Young Lion of the West." Elisha Johnson, Henry O'Reilly, and James Seymour were but a few of the more prominent citizens drawn away by the prospects of one or another of Rochester's rivals.<sup>171</sup>

That a surprising number of the city's residents moved on is revealed by a comparison of successive directory lists. A sampling of 400 names in the 1838 directory, only 166 of which reappeared in the list of 1844, suggests that approximately 60 per cent had left, so that barely a third of the more numerous adult male citizens of 1844 could boast five years' residence within the city. Again, only 221 of a sampling of 500 names in the 1844 directory reappeared in the 1849 listing, indicating that approximately 55 per cent departed during the more favorable years of the late forties. Though the turnover may not have been so rapid as that of a decade before, the actual number of migrants was much larger.<sup>172</sup>

Fortunately for the city's future the stream of newcomers more than filled all vacancies. A few were still arriving from New England, but Germany was almost as well represented, while Great Britain and her possessions (especially Ireland) accounted for more than a fifth of the population. Though the foreign-born comprised nearly a third of the city's population in 1845, the majority were of New York State origin, hailing generally from the older communities of western New York.<sup>173</sup> The enterprise of the Genesee was centering more definitely at Rochester. Monroe County as a whole continued its steady growth, greatly exceeding its near neighbors, yet the city, increasing more rapidly, comprised more than a third of the county's population by 1845.<sup>174</sup>

While Rochester's growth did not offer the encouragement to specula-

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St. Louis as the giants of the future, outranking even New York within another half-century. *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIX (1848), 383-386.

<sup>171</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVII (1855), 46-52; Edwin Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 15, Scrapbook, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Advertiser*, Dec. 14, 1840, May 18, 1847. See also L. B. Swan, *Journal of a Trip to Michigan in 1841* (Rochester, 1904), in which visits to former Rochesterians are recounted.

<sup>172</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1838), (1844), (1849-50). Approximately 70 per cent departed in the 11-year period after 1838 as compared with approximately 80 per cent in the previous 11 years, judging from the directory comparisons made by Miss Dorothy S. Truesdale. Occasional letters to the folks at home or to former friends in Rochester and frequent marriage and death notices in local papers indicate that at least those whose Rochester ties were to this extent maintained had been attracted by Western urban sites and commercial prospects rather than by the cheap farm lands of the interior. *Genesee Farmer*, VII (1837), 118; E. B. Elwood to Henry O'Reilly, Toledo, Ohio, Dec. 8, 1842, O'Reilly Doc., No. 1672; Newspaper Index.

<sup>173</sup> *New York State Census* (1845).

<sup>174</sup> *New York State Census* (1845); Andrews Scrapbook, B, p. 86, Roch. Hist. Soc.

tors afforded by many Western towns, it proved sufficient to justify sound investments. Many inflated property values had to be scaled down, but if the titles had been acquired in the early thirties the losses were only fictitious in character. Thus a 169-acre farm on the north-western edge of the city sold in the realtor's darkest year, 1841, for three times its purchase price of 1830.<sup>175</sup> Edwin Scrantom knocked down numerous properties at lively auction sales in the Arcade Hall during these years. On one occasion seven town lots netted a total of \$5191, while in 1844, when values were beginning to rise, a commercial lot on Buffalo Street brought \$500 a front foot.<sup>176</sup>

J. M. Schermerhorn, among others, found that only by improving his properties could their values be maintained. "Rents are exceedingly low," he informed his wife, "for dwelling houses especially—but I must submit to the times."<sup>177</sup> Many residents held a different view of the situation. A series of ten articles, signed by "Franklin" in the *Workingman's Advocate* in 1840, attacked the rentals demanded for small stores and cheap houses. Tenements and houses that did not cost \$1000 demanded \$150 in annual rents, he declared, while mansions valued at \$5000 could be rented for \$500, and the only remedy for the poor was to move out to the country.<sup>178</sup> A large body of citizens gathered in public protest two years later, and though the demand for additional houses remained brisk, rents did come down 20 to 30 per cent.<sup>179</sup> Some 265 new houses, two-thirds of them of wood, were erected in Monroe County, the great majority in the city, during 1840, but they averaged less than \$1500 apiece.<sup>180</sup> Yet one Greek Revival mansion commanded as much as \$7000 when sold at forced sale,<sup>181</sup> while visitors remarked at the spacious dwellings of numerous Rochesterians.<sup>182</sup>

As the city continued its encroachments on the surrounding farms, an additional 304 acres was brought within the limits, chiefly in the annexation of grounds for a new cemetery on the southern border of the city.<sup>183</sup> Yet ample room for growth still existed within the corporate

<sup>175</sup> Otis Farm folder, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; see Smith and Cole, *Fluctuations in American Business*, pp. 53-58.

<sup>176</sup> *Rochester Daily Sun*, July 4, 1839; *Democrat*, July 2, 1842; Apr. 1, 1843; Aug. 1, 1844; *Advertiser*, Mar. 1, 1844.

<sup>177</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Mar. 29, 1843, Schermerhorn Letters.

<sup>178</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, Feb. 11-28, 1840.

<sup>179</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 11, 1842; J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Mar. 14, 1843, Schermerhorn Letters.

<sup>180</sup> U. S. *Census* (1840), p. 129.

<sup>181</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Jan. 17, 1843, Schermerhorn Letters.

<sup>182</sup> Sir Charles Lyell, *Travels in North America in the Years 1841-42* (London, 1845), I, 17; see below, pp. 299-300.

<sup>183</sup> W. Earl Weller, "The Expanding Boundaries of Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 178, 181.

bounds. Thus a total of 17,658 bushels of potatoes grew on 250 city acres, and 4,884 bushels of corn on another 166 acres in 1844, when the city numbered 1,503 milk cows and 2,627 hogs. Few cows or truck gardens appeared within the four central wards, but the 154 farmers resident in the city cultivated broad fields in the outlying wards and adjoining towns. Their milk, butter, cheese, and vegetables made a sizable contribution to the local produce market.<sup>184</sup>

The fundamental city pattern was already taking shape.<sup>185</sup> Not only were the major roads that had converged on the bridge in the earlier days now fully developed and most of the cross streets within the radius of one mile clearly laid out, but settlement was pressing outward along each of the chief highways. The improvement of five of these arteries by plank road companies after 1848 accelerated the outward extension of residential areas, which were served in a measure by two competing omnibus lines in the late forties.<sup>186</sup> The river still provided the major dividing line, though four bridges as well as the aqueduct and railroad bridge facilitated communication, enabling the population on the east side almost to match that on the west bank by 1850.<sup>187</sup> The Erie and the Genesee Valley canals likewise segregated various portions of the city, while the railroad promised to have a similar effect.



The forties also witnessed the further development of Rochester's industrial pattern. Forced to admit that "in every kind of business save manufacturing it [Buffalo] far surpasses Rochester,"<sup>188</sup> the water-power city's potentialities as a manufacturing center were increasingly stressed. Milling still dominated the scene, for new leadership as well as new markets and raw materials were needed before flour's preëminence could be challenged, but these requirements began to appear by the mid-century.

The suspicion that the Rochester flour industry had reached its maximum girth was gaining weight.<sup>189</sup> The grain fields of the West overshadowed those of the Genesee, and while enough wheat arrived to enable Rochester to grind and ship 35,194 tons of flour by canal in 1844, the same year saw 91,927 tons of flour from western mills loaded on canal boats at Buffalo.<sup>190</sup> Rochester's 400,000-barrel shipment by canal that season increased nearly 50 per cent the next year, despite a decline

<sup>184</sup> N. Y. State *Census* (1845).

<sup>185</sup> City Map of 1845-46.

<sup>186</sup> *Advertiser*, July 9, 1842; May 9, 10, 1848; *Democrat*, July 7, 1848; Dec. 6, 1850; Freeman Clarke, Day Book, MS.

<sup>187</sup> *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine*, XXV (1851), 136; *Sun*, June, 11, 1839.

<sup>188</sup> Elisabeth S. Spencer to E. S. S. Eaton, Rochester, Oct. 6, 1845, E. S. S. Eaton Letters.

<sup>189</sup> *Rural New Yorker*, Aug. 29, 1850.

<sup>190</sup> Senate *Doc.* (1845), No. 115, Stmt. 2; *Advertiser*, Nov. 28, 1844.

in the number of mills, yet the profits failed to show a proportionate gain since the price had tumbled to barely four dollars a barrel.<sup>191</sup> Prices mounted during the next two years, because of crop failures in Europe, boosting Rochester's canal shipments to 631,574 barrels, while the total product of local mills approached 700,000 barrels. But other milling centers likewise benefited. Baltimore and Oswego each handled more flour than Rochester—although they did not mill it all—and new flour producers in the West were greatly stimulated.<sup>192</sup>

The chief drawbacks to flour milling were the rapid price fluctuations and the large investments tied up annually with little better than a gambler's chance of a fair return. The hazards of the situation increased when grain was bought at a distance, forcing the miller to risk his funds during the slow shipment to Rochester as well as during the period required for the delivery of flour to market. The late forties saw Rochester millers relying more largely than for several years on Genesee wheat. Fortunately, the output of Monroe and Livingston Counties stood second and third in the nation, sufficient to keep the mills fairly busy, had Rochester been able to secure the whole of it;<sup>193</sup> however, competing millers up the valley again enjoyed a thriving business, now that the Genesee Canal provided a means for export. When in 1844 the cost of the raw material was taken out, the receipts from Rochester flour totalled but \$108,444, which had to be divided between the owners and employees of eighteen mills.<sup>194</sup> It was not surprising that a rapid turnover should occur. Only two millers of 1834, Allcott and Ely, remained actively engaged in the business a decade later.<sup>195</sup>

Despite the greater respectability which milling retained, numerous able young men, such as Lewis Selye and Seth C. Jones, gave their attention to the various foundries and machine shops. As the iron demands of the railroads and other enterprises increased, the value of these products surpassed that of lumber and other forest articles. Eleven iron foundries, employing from five to forty-five men each, turned out products weighing 2,890 tons in 1846. Machine shops, connected with several of these foundries, employed 759 men in 1848, valuing their product at \$748,000.<sup>196</sup> Edge tools, household fixtures, stoves, steam

<sup>191</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 28, 1844; Nov. 24, 1845; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIII (1845), 290, XV (1846), 520.

<sup>192</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVIII (1848), 306-307; XXII (1850), 204, 328; XXIII (1850), 51; *Democrat*, Dec. 14, 1848.

<sup>193</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXV, 87; U. S. Census (1850); Percy W. Bidwell and John I. Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States: 1620-1860* (2nd ed.; New York, 1941), pp. 237-240.

<sup>194</sup> N. Y. State Census (1845); *Roch. Republican*, July 20, 1847.

<sup>195</sup> *Directory* (1834), (1844).

<sup>196</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVII (1847), 46-52; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 88, 197, 200; *New Genesee Farmer*, IV (1843), 32; *The Western Almanac* (1846), adv. on back cover.

Much criticism centered upon the city's undeveloped power resources. It could not be denied that the twenty-odd mills and the numerous other establishments making use of the Genesee's power scarcely tapped a fraction of its energy. Though a few of the mills at the main falls, installing the recently invented turbines in the place of older water wheels, reached down over the edge of the gorge to gain the benefit of a ten- or twenty-foot water head, the rest of the power of the ninety-six-foot cataract remained undeveloped, while the large resources at the lower falls were almost entirely neglected.<sup>203</sup> A survey in 1845 found scarcely a thousand men employed in the various mills and factories operated by water power, with only one-sixth of the city's potential power developed—a sharp contrast to the situation at Lowell, Utica, and other less favored fall towns.<sup>204</sup>

The agitation for industrial expansion achieved some results. While the thriving sheep herds up the valley possibly accounted for the six small woolen factories of the mid-forties,<sup>205</sup> Lowell's cotton factories, current symbols of industrial enterprise, focused greater interest on the effort to establish a new cotton factory at the brink of the main falls. Seth C. Jones, who had grown up with the city, joined forces with a merchant-weaver from the East, enabling the Jones Mill, with 150 workers, to overshadow the smaller Genesee Cotton Mill, a survival from the previous decade. Together they turned out some six thousand yards of cotton cloth a day, importing their raw material by canal from New York. Not only was the local market supplied, but cotton goods found a modest place in the city's exports.<sup>206</sup> It was not without significance that the first record of a factory whistle in Rochester was the provision of a bell on the top of the Jones cotton mill.<sup>207</sup>

A considerable revival occurred among local boatbuilders as the reputation of Rochester boats spread along Western canals. With the output of 56 boats in 1845 increasing to more than 100 the next year and to 233 and 221 in the two succeeding years, the valuation averaged around \$1500 a boat, affording employment to 450 men. The enlargement of the canal east of Syracuse and the failure to complete the work from that point to Rochester prompted the removal of several boatyards to Syracuse for the construction of large line boats, but the remaining companies continued to supply one of Rochester's major industries.<sup>208</sup>

A number of special articles were produced in expanding local fac-

<sup>203</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 8, 1844; Aug. 22, 23, Sept. 6, 1845.

<sup>204</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 22, 1845.

<sup>205</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVII (1847), 50-52.

<sup>206</sup> *Republican*, Nov. 24, 1846; *Democrat*, Feb. 22, 1848; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 42, 88, 198; *Assembly Doc.* (1850).

<sup>207</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 21, 1848.

<sup>208</sup> Daniel W. Brown to Charles Perkins, Rochester, Feb. 27, 1847, Perkins Papers, MSS, R. P. L.; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 25, 65, 87, 258.

tories. After the burning of his first carriage works, James Cunningham erected a large factory in 1848, soon extending his sales into the West.<sup>209</sup> The Rochester Scale Works turned out many useful articles, some of them of local invention, while water and suction pumps were manufactured in the city.<sup>210</sup> Water-driven machinery found its way into other shops, notably the several large printing establishments.<sup>211</sup>

Unfortunately the campaign for an industrial city was hampered by a growing fear lest the water power of the Genesee be diverted. The canal improvements at Lockport had facilitated an increased passage of Lake Erie water through the gap, but sedimentation on the long level stretch east of that point checked the flow before it reached Rochester. In 1845 and 1846 local millers became alarmed when the river below the canal feeder began to run dry. The demand of the Genesee Valley Canal upon the river's resources promised to aggravate the situation.<sup>212</sup>

Numerous petitions were sent to Albany requesting relief. Hervey Ely and Jacob Graves, both good Whigs, took the lead in protest against the results of Democratic economy, but it was more than a political question. A state-sponsored investigation during the dry season in October, 1846, reported 3,120 cubic feet a minute drawn from the river for the Erie, while the Genesee Valley Canal required 9,060 cubic feet, leaving but 5,860 for the mills, which normally consumed double that quantity. Spurred to clear the channel west of Rochester, the canal board explored the possibility of converting the small lakes south of Rochester into reservoirs for the replenishment of the river during dry seasons. A dam in the upper Genesee gorge above Mount Morris was likewise considered. Yet the damage claims of local millers were rejected at an open hearing in Rochester, and no effective means appeared to compensate for the increasing demands of the Genesee Canal. In the meantime irreparable damage to Rochester's industrial aspirations resulted from the protracted discussion of the threat to its water power.<sup>213</sup>

In similar fashion the credit resources of the community suffered from a conservative and hesitant policy. The short term extensions of

<sup>209</sup> *Democrat*, May 19, 1848; *Nat. Cycl. Amer. Biog.*, XX, 329.

<sup>210</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 197; *Democrat*, Apr. 12, 1842; Sept. 24, 1849; *Advertiser*, June 28, 1848; *Genesee Farmer*, XI (1850), 90.

<sup>211</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XVII (1847), 48-52; *Democrat*, Feb. 14, Apr. 20, 1844; Jan. 20, 1846.

<sup>212</sup> William Reynolds to Abelard Reynolds, Rochester, Aug. 17, 1846, Reynolds Papers; *Memorial of the Inhabitants of the City of Rochester Interested in the Water of the Genesee* (Rochester, 1846).

<sup>213</sup> Daniel Marsh, *Report on the Diversion of the Water of the Genesee River* (Rochester, 1847); "Canal Board Report on the Diversion of the Waters of the Genesee," *Assembly Doc.* (1848), No. 172; "Report of the Canal Board on Honeoye, Conesus, and other lakes," *Senate Doc.* (1850), No. 40; *Memorial of the Owners of Water of the Genesee River at Rochester* (Rochester, 1853).



the Bank of Rochester charter were considered most unfriendly on the part of the legislature, but the final expiration of the charter in 1847, removing \$225,000 from local circulation, was not offset as it might easily have been by the organization of a new free bank.<sup>214</sup> Though Rochester banks developed a reputation for stability after 1842, critics stressed the need for a more venturesome support of new industries. The contraction in bank note circulation was overcome by 1844, yet local credit facilities did not begin to compare with those of Buffalo.<sup>215</sup> Indeed, the city's banking capital of \$1,160,000 in 1849 gave it a rank of twenty-sixth among the cities of the nation and presented a serious handicap to the aspiring industrialists of the city seventeenth in population.<sup>216</sup> Fortunately the situation improved late in the forties when Freeman Clarke, an able young banker, formerly engaged in numerous enterprises west of the city, located in Rochester and strengthened its ties with capitalists both in Buffalo and the East.<sup>217</sup>



Though much was expected from the banks and the waterfalls, more fruitful developments occurred in three humble industries which received little attention from the advocates of an industrial city and still less benefit from the waterfalls. Much of the leadership and capital came likewise from new sources; frequently from the East or from Europe. While several of the new ventures soon disappeared, promising beginnings occurred in the shoe, clothing, and nursery fields during the forties, laying the foundations for expansion in the next period.

Numerous shoemakers, long active in Rochester, first began to organize along industrial lines during the early forties. Shoemakers' "boarding houses" appeared where the apprentices sewed the shoes by hand, yet the shoe merchant still took his measurements directly from the customer's feet, cutting the pattern and often the leather himself before dispatching the job by runner to the boarding house. Shoes left on the hands of these merchant-craftsmen gradually accumulated stocks available to customers unable to wait for a fitting, but it was not until 1842 that the tanner, Henry Churchill, and the shoemaker, Jesse W. Hatch, joined in a partnership with the avowed object of producing ready-made shoes. The arrival of an expert English shoe cutter the next year enabled Hatch to advertise approved styles and standard sizes at prices considerably below those asked by the older shoe merchants, notably Jacob Gould and Oren Sage. The successful entry a year later

<sup>214</sup> *Advertiser*, May 16, 1845; *Democrat*, Apr. 23, 1847.

<sup>215</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, IV (1841), 476-479; *Democrat*, Sept. 17, 1842, Nov. 20, 1844; *Directory* (1844), pp. 24-26.

<sup>216</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXI (1849), 458; U. S. *Census* (1850).

<sup>217</sup> Freeman Clarke Letters.

of robbers who removed over one hundred pairs of shoes supplied a unique advertisement of Hatch and Company's facilities.<sup>218</sup>

By the end of the decade ten fairly well established shoe firms employed upwards of 500 workmen in Rochester, paying an estimated \$75,000 in annual wages and double that amount for materials. Approximately 175,000 pairs of shoes were turned out in 1848. Hatch and Company on State Street, now one of the larger firms, specialized in the Congress Shoe and various styles popular among the ladies.<sup>219</sup>

The clothing industry experienced a similar transition from custom tailoring to the production of the ready-made articles displayed in the "emporiums of fashion" on Exchange Street. Myer Greentree, a recent arrival from Germany, was possibly the first merchant tailor in Rochester to produce standard patterns, while the increasing number of German-Jewish immigrants supplied workmen to sew the garments cut by their enterprising countryman. By the mid-century no less than thirty establishments engaged in the manufacture and sale of clothing, though the majority, as small shops, were generally operated by two or three families who took most of the sewing to their homes. Eighteen of the shops clustered in the low wooden structures that lined the northern side of the main bridge. It proved an advantageous location for the display of the city's new industrial specialty, which soon employed an estimated 1,800 persons and turned out a product valued at \$400,000 in 1848.<sup>220</sup>

While no power-driven machinery had yet appeared in either the shoe or clothing factories, in other respects the break with old handicraft traditions was apparent. A bonnet shop, employing some thirty girls in 1843, even more closely resembled a factory, while a glove and whip factory employed sixty-two others.<sup>221</sup> Several breweries recovered from the more temperate thirties,<sup>222</sup> and each of six large brickyards averaged a million bricks annually,<sup>223</sup> speeding the replacement of the old frame buildings in the central portion of the city.

Signs of a new day for Rochester appeared on every hand at the mid-century. The organization of a steam engine factory, ready to fur-

<sup>218</sup> Jesse W. Hatch, "The Old-Time Shoemaker and Shoemaking," R. H. S., *Pub.*, V, 82-86; William H. Samson, "Studies in Local History," Scrapbook, LI, LVI; *Democrat*, July 4, 1844.

<sup>219</sup> *Democrat*, June 2, 1848. These statistics were provided by "a gentleman who is largely engaged in the business and conversant with its conditions and extent throughout the city." However, the figures appear out of proportion to the smaller figures in the N. Y. *Census* of 1855.

<sup>220</sup> *Democrat*, June 16, 1848; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XX (1849), 347-348. See the caution regarding these figures in the preceding note.

<sup>221</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 16, Mar. 1, 1844; June 16, 1848.

<sup>222</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1845), Plate No. 27, 3.

<sup>223</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 198.

nish a substitute for the faltering power of the Genesee,<sup>224</sup> and the establishment of the Rochester Gas Light Company, with its promise of bringing Rochester out of the dark,<sup>225</sup> gave assurance for the city's future, though further developments in each of these fields were embarrassed by the difficulty of importing coal. One of the most interesting ventures of the day was that of Samuel L. Selden, an ingenious lawyer who sought to perfect a machine for the manufacture of lead pipe. Despite repeated discouragements, Selden worked away, hoping to produce a cheap pipe that would carry either water or gas or the newly invented telegraph lines and thus win the vast markets foreshadowed by these rapidly developing services. Before a satisfactory machine was designed in Rochester, however, other inventors had made progress, defeating local efforts to capture that field.<sup>226</sup>

Though not suspected at the time, Rochester's future was to be more closely identified with its budding nursery industry, product of the Genesee Country's fertility rather than of its water power. Indeed, despite a growing reliance on raw materials brought from a distance, the city's close ties with its Genesee hinterland were still jealously guarded. When Western wheat began to supersede that of the Genesee, renewed emphasis was placed on livestock, and attention was given to a more varied crop program.<sup>227</sup> The decline in the productivity of some fields spurred the use of fertilizers, and with the appearance in the late thirties of a favored species of mulberry tree, the Chinese *Morus multi-caulis*, supposed to thrive in the soil and climate of up-state New York, thousands of seedlings and silkworm eggs were peddled through the valley by Eastern nurserymen.<sup>228</sup> Yet the craze departed as quickly as it had appeared, and the most determined growers were able to produce only a few yards of silk cloth for display at the annual agricultural fairs of the early forties.<sup>229</sup>

More striking displays of fruit and flowers were sent to the annual

<sup>224</sup> *Western Almanac and Franklin Calendar* (Rochester, 1846), back cover adv.; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 197, 198, 200.

<sup>225</sup> F. J. Leerburger, "The Development of the Gas Industry in Rochester to 1906" (1940), typescript, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>226</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Dec. 18, 25, 1841, Jan. 11, 1842, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Samuel L. Selden to Freeman Clarke, Freeman Clarke Letters, 1842-43; *Nat. Cy. Am. Biog.*, IV, 154.

<sup>227</sup> N. Y. State Agricultural Society, *Transactions* (1844), IV, 99-101. William Garbutt's report on his careful farm records of the previous twenty years is of great value. Less than a fourth of his 200-acre wheat farm was planted to wheat in 1842, while his cattle numbered 300 sheep, 30 hogs, 15 cows, and 8 horses. An income of \$2200 to \$3200 minus \$1200 to \$1600 expenses during the thirties was now down to \$1578.02 minus \$1204 in 1842.

<sup>228</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, V (1835), 15; VII (1837), 2, 11, 22, 155, 194, 380; VIII (1838), 240, 330.

<sup>229</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, VIII, 115; *Republican*, Jan. 13, Aug. 29, 1843.

fairs by the rapidly developing nurseries of Rochester. Discouragement over losses in the mulberry fad helped to persuade William Reynolds and M. B. Bateham to lease their nursery on Sophia Street in 1839 to their young manager, George Ellwanger. Reared in a German vineyard but with four years' experience in Rochester, Ellwanger soon joined in partnership with a recently arrived Irishman, Patrick Barry, who had served his apprenticeship at the leading nursery of the day, that of William Prince on Long Island. By October, 1840, Ellwanger and Barry were ready to announce the establishment of their Mount Hope Garden and Nurseries on a seven-acre plot in the southeast portion of the city. Asa Rowe's nursery on the northwestern edge of town, and Samuel Moulson's on the northeastern outskirts, covered larger areas and advertised extensive selections, but Ellwanger and Barry, diligently turning all profits into the business, were able to double their holdings by 1844 and import a fresh stock of seedlings from Europe.<sup>230</sup>

The nursery business proved a happy find for the Flour City. The canal gave Rochester nurserymen an eight-day advantage over Hudson Valley competitors in supplying the Western market, where the demand was expanding most rapidly. Despite the northern location, which inured the plantings to rigorous climates and assured the hardihood necessary to survive transplantation, the moderating influence of Lake Ontario's seldom-frozen waters provided a safeguard against the severe cold spells which sometimes afflicted Eastern rivals. The slow-sailing vessels on the Atlantic protected the American market from easy exploitation by European horticulturists, while fresh plantings, brought directly to Rochester from abroad, as George Ellwanger did in 1844 and succeeding years, offered an escape from the diseases which were infecting some older nurseries. Moreover, the nurseries afforded a profitable use for fields adjoining the city and helped to stimulate a revival of fruit culture in western New York.<sup>231</sup>

These developments were only faintly suggested in 1843 when the state fair met at Rochester. A ten-acre plot on State Street one mile north of the Four Corners had been fenced in for the exhibits, and the public houses and private homes of Rochester were filled to overflowing by visitors from all parts of the state. Canal boats, trains, and stages converged on the city, and soon every wheeled vehicle within a radius of fifty miles appeared to have joined the procession, so that the streets were jammed with shouting drivers. Ex-President Van Buren, Governor Seward, and Daniel Webster were on hand, attracting 20,000 around the speakers' platform, while others thronged the cattle yards or attended

<sup>230</sup> Blake McKelvey, "The Flower City: Center of Nurseries and Fruit Orchards," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 129-136.

<sup>231</sup> McKelvey, "The Flower City," pp. 129-136; *Democrat*, Sept. 11, 1840; July 16, Sept. 2, 1841.

the plowing match held on the eastern outskirts of town (near the present site of the Women's Campus of the University of Rochester). Though James S. Wadsworth from up the valley presided with Henry O'Reilly as recording secretary, the latter, having already removed to Albany, attended as a visitor, and few of Rochester's earlier leaders were in evidence. Grain prizes were awarded, E. S. Beach and Company receiving a medal for their superfine flour, but more interest was shown in the cattle show and in the horticultural exhibit, which surpassed any previously held at the state fairs. New interests and new blood were evidenced when young Ellwanger and Barry captured the first prize for their floral exhibit, featuring dahlias and roses and a hundred other potted flowers.<sup>232</sup>

By the mid-century local nurseries had taken firm root. A keen competition for prizes developed at the annual exhibits of the Genesee Valley Horticultural Society, usually held at Rochester in collaboration with the Monroe County Agricultural Society. Several new nurseries were established on the city's outskirts by seedmen from the East or from Europe, and young Josiah W. Bissell joined with another Rochesterian, Horace Hooker, in the development of a nursery on the old Canandaigua road (East Avenue). Yet Ellwanger and Barry maintained their leadership by expanding their grounds to nearly one hundred acres and more especially by introducing for the first time in America the new varieties of dwarf fruit trees then being developed in Europe. Barry, on one of the partners' frequent visits to the continent, made a special study of the methods of pruning for fruitfulness, and by the mid-century their orchards and display gardens were gaining recognition as the best in America.<sup>233</sup>

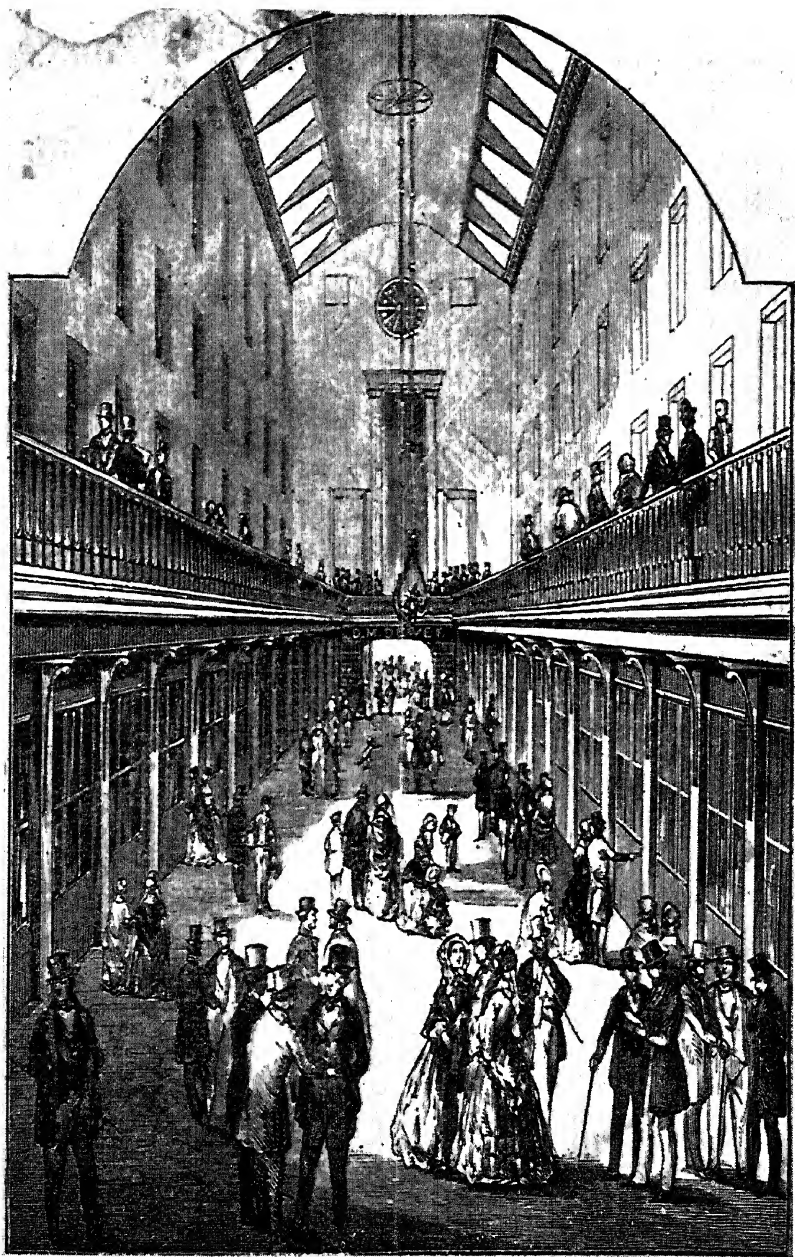
In the midst of the growing concern lest the wheat and other products of the vast prairies of the West inundate the Genesee, the nurserymen of Rochester were able to offer a new activity for neighboring farmers. The prospect of invading the English market with cheese and meats cured in the old Irish fashion was frequently considered, especially after the lowering of the British tariffs,<sup>234</sup> while numerous petitions asked that New York State produce be given preferential rates on the canal,<sup>235</sup> but popular interest centered in the expanding orchards of the area. The verdant nurseries and blooming orchards that bordered Rochester on all sides made it a model community in the eyes of mid-century romanticists, naturalists, and utilitarians alike. When the

<sup>232</sup> N. Y. State Agricultural Society, *Transactions*, III (1843), 19-28; *Advertiser*, Sept. 25, 1843.

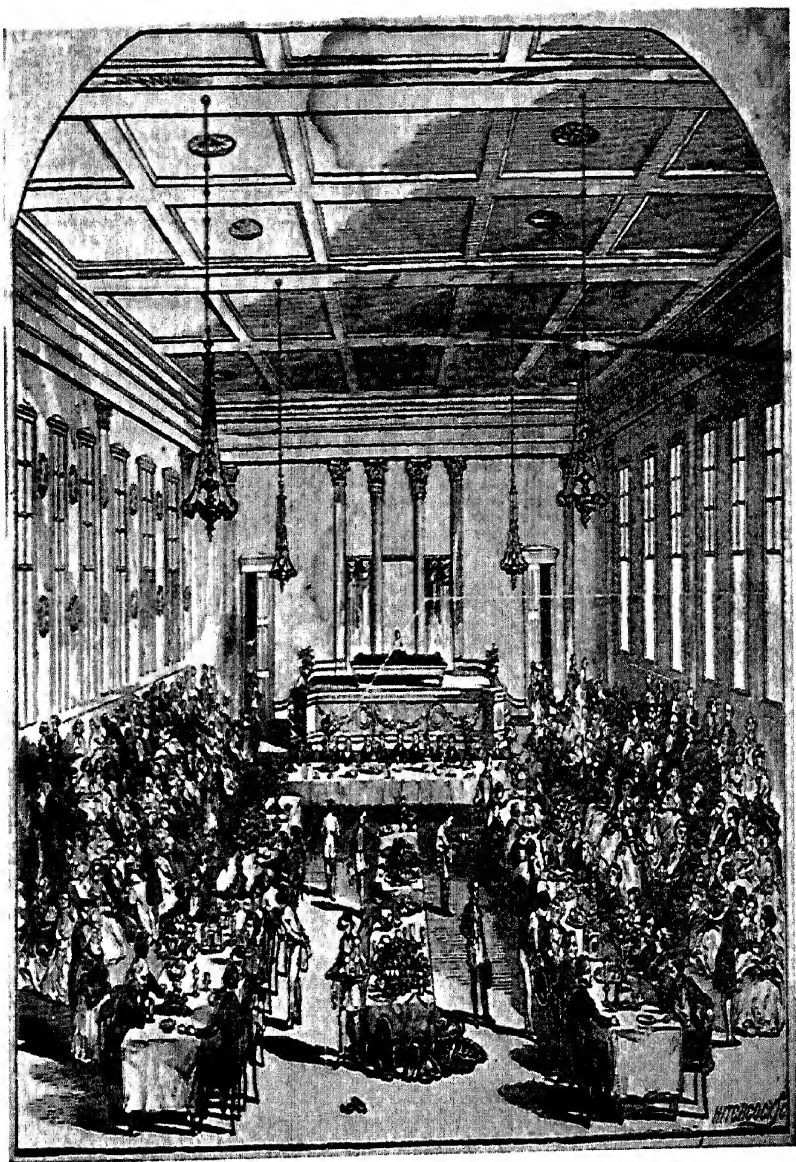
<sup>233</sup> McKelvey, "The Flower City," pp. 134-144.

<sup>234</sup> N. Y. State Agricultural Society, *Transactions*, IV, 238-242; *Genesee Farmer*, VII (1846), 39.

<sup>235</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XII (1845), 581; *Genesee Farmer*, VI (1845), 147-148; VII, 80-81.



XI. INTERIOR VIEW OF REYNOLDS ARCADE, 1851



XII. BANQUET SCENE IN CORINTHIAN HALL, 1851

state fair visited the city again in 1851 an unprecedented throng of 100,000 taxed the city's facilities to the limit, while the horticultural displays prepared under the supervision of Levi A. Ward surpassed any previously held in America, with Ellwanger and Barry taking most of the prizes.<sup>236</sup> It would only be a few years before visitors would remark that a "Flower City" was rising to supersede the old "Flour City."<sup>237</sup>

<sup>236</sup> McKelvey, "The Flower City," pp. 143-145.

<sup>237</sup> Dewey Scrapbook, General Information, III, 93, a letter of 1860, Roch. Hist. Soc.



## CHAPTER IX

### CIVIC AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

#### 1834-1850

**M**ODIFICATIONS in Rochester's civic spirit and institutional activity matched the striking changes in economic outlook during the forties. The same depression which chastened so many adventuresome members of the community curbed the optimism with which the newly established city faced several of its problems in the mid-thirties. If economy and caution gained respectability as private virtues, they became at the same time hard and fast civic standards. Unfortunately the increased number and complexity of the city's problems made retrenchment difficult. Every such effort merely aggravated the situation. The establishment of varied semi-public institutions somewhat relieved the public authorities, though the community's fiscal burden was not so much reduced as made more palatable. The development of a public school system and the provision of several state and county institutions hastened the transition from a community dominated by individuals to a city of varied institutions and organizations—the urban pattern Rochester was rapidly assuming at the mid-century.

#### TOWARD CIVIC COMPLACENCY

A healthy spirit of optimism characterized the mid-thirties when the newly established city girded itself for the tasks ahead. The assumption of full municipal responsibilities had been deferred so long that major problems were at hand. Leading men of affairs eagerly assumed public office. An astounding number were called briefly into civic service—as aldermen, fire wardens, school trustees, and the like. Unfortunately a sharp disagreement over the ends to be attained added fuel to existing political rivalries, discouraging the efforts of the less partisan. The democratic tradition that the honors of office should be passed along resulted in short terms, usually completed before a firm grasp of the community's problems was acquired. As the years passed, more and more of the numerous candidates enrolled from those having some interest to gain or safeguard, and by the mid-forties the concern for reduced taxes had gained dominant representation.

The first city election saw the triumph of the new Whig and temperance forces. The council included among its ten regular and assistant

members such estimable citizens as Dr. Frederick F. Backus, Colonel Ashbel Riley, and Thomas Kempshall, who promptly elected Jonathan Child mayor. Despite the previous attempt to reduce the tax limit from \$8,000 to \$5,000, the council found it necessary to exhaust all revenue sources. Before the year was out a total of \$18,690 had been expended on the various community functions. The most extensive outlays were for street improvements, fire-fighting equipment, and general governmental expenses—a foretaste of developments soon to occur in these fields. Small special levies supported the schools and the poor, yet the council's restraint was evident both in its refusal to approve a comprehensive sewer plan and in its failure to use the authority granted by the charter to raise \$20,000 for the construction of a public water system.<sup>1</sup>

A major resolve of the first council was to check the flow of liquor, which had become a public scandal in the eyes of the more respectable elements. Yet, despite the long agitation for this reform, the Whigs pledged to its adoption had been elected by slim majorities, impelling the council to make some concessions. Four liquor licenses were accordingly issued on payment of forty- and fifty-dollar fees. The compromise, however, represented such a drastic reduction from the hundred-odd licenses granted at more reasonable rates in previous years that the opposition forces gained an easy victory at the next election. The only successful Whig was the venerable Dr. Matthew Brown, whose long public service during village days assured wide support. The other new councilmen included such distinguished Democrats as James Seymour and Isaac R. Elwood, as well as two grocers personally interested in liquor permits.<sup>2</sup>

The adoption of a more lenient license policy precipitated the dramatic resignation of Mayor Child. Under the charter the mayor was a weak executive, appointed by the council and charged with the execution of its ordinances, with scant discretion or authority of his own. In order, however, to assure some continuity in the official personnel, the mayor's term carried over six months after the expiration of the council which selected him, and Jonathan Child thus found himself obliged to sign the numerous licenses granted by the second council. The only alternative was to tender his resignation, which he accordingly did in a lengthy address that marked the high point of local temperance agitation for many years.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Donald W. Gilbert, "The Government and Finances of Rochester, N. Y." (Ph.D., thesis, Harvard Univ., 1930), Tables I and II. I am deeply indebted to this scholarly and painstaking study for statistical information on fiscal matters used in this section and elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Henry O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 264-266; Gilbert, "Government and Finances," pp. 142-143; *Rochester Observer*, May 29, 1829.

<sup>3</sup> *Rochester Daily Democrat*, June 27, 1835; *Common Council Proceedings*, June 23, 1835 (hereafter C. C., *Proc.*).

Other problems pressed for action, and after choosing as mayor Jacob Gould, a prominent Democrat and prosperous shoe merchant, the council proceeded with vigor to its duties. Most urgent was the need for street and sewer improvements, and within a year Buffalo Street was macadamized, several others were partially improved, and many sewers repaired, at a total cost of \$35,980.<sup>4</sup> Although assessments on adjacent property owners and loans negotiated at the banks with the anticipated payments as security met these charges, when the total expenditure soared to \$59,673, the issue of economy became dominant, enabling the Whigs to capture six seats in the third council.<sup>5</sup>

Economy, however, was more easily advocated than achieved. When plans for a new Buffalo Street sewer, with stone walls five feet high and three feet apart, were approved, the project was rushed to completion in an effort to correct the unsanitary conditions that threatened to blight the city's principal street. Yet the \$4,000 expended on this sewer proved scarcely half the cost of the fifty acres acquired south of the city for Mount Hope Cemetery, while a new public market was constructed during the year.<sup>6</sup> These outlays, added to the normal expenses, compelled the council to boost its general tax levy to \$15,000, almost double the legal maximum, and to fund its various floating debts at \$15,000.<sup>7</sup> Abraham Schermerhorn, chosen mayor at the expiration of Gould's term, resigned after two months when the gathering clouds of the depression required his attention at the bank. Thomas Kempshall, his Whig successor, full of the optimism of local millers that year, proceeded so vigorously with street improvements, aided by the Democratic fourth council, that he was sent to Congress the next fall.<sup>8</sup>

The confidence which animated the business community that winter took hold of the civic authorities. When the bank suspension threatened a shortage both of small notes and of funds to continue the public works, the city fathers boldly came to the rescue. At the suggestion of Henry E. Rochester, prominent Whig, the Democratic council issued \$6,000 in shinplasters to be paid for labor on the public streets and secured against local assessments. Before the end of the year, over \$50,000 was expended from this source, considerably aiding the unemployed, while useful improvements included the grading of Main Street hill just east of the bridge, the repair of the bridge itself, seriously damaged by the great flood of 1835, the construction of Andrews Street Bridge above the main falls, and the resurfacing of several streets in the central district.

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert, Table III-1, part 4.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert, Table I-1.

<sup>6</sup> C. C. *Proc.*, Dec. 20, 1836, June 26, 1838, Jan. 8, 1839; *Democrat*, June 9, July 28, 1836; Jan. 4, 1837.

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert, Table VIII, pt. 1, Table XI.

<sup>8</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 8, 1837; *Roch. Republican*, Nov. 13, 1838.

When Elisha Johnson became mayor that January, he could congratulate the city upon the "enlarged views" of his predecessors, noting that the one major improvement still needed was a public water works.<sup>9</sup>

But as 1838 with its deflated flour prices brought gloom to the community, the popular attitude toward municipal expenditures began to change. The Democratic council was turned out, and Mayor Johnson sounded a note of caution.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless the Whigs, who took over the council and finally the mayor's post (to which they named Thomas H. Rochester) and all other offices as well, could not muster the courage to apply the knife. Indeed, a generous outlay on the streets and for fire apparatus seemed in line with the new Whig emphasis on internal improvements. Under their auspices the city's expenditures exceeded \$100,000, both in 1838 and 1839, while the gross debt was pushed up to \$126,000 by the latter date. Partisan criticism was drowned under the mounting clamor of the Log Cabin campaign, and meanwhile the benefits derived from these unprecedented outlays were eagerly enjoyed until after the election when, suddenly, a drastic reduction in municipal expenditures was achieved.<sup>11</sup>



Dissatisfaction with the municipal services gained frequent expression in charter revisions during these years. Neither the repeated amendments nor the extensive outlays of the late thirties produced very suitable results, however, and a feeling of disillusionment or distrust developed, heightened, no doubt, by the general gloom of the depression. The caution and complacency which marked the forties was relieved only in a few services, such as the public schools, by vigorous efforts toward reform. Elsewhere, the absence of an effective leadership greatly retarded the growth of Rochester's civic functions.<sup>12</sup>

Most of the charter amendments, which occurred almost annually after 1836, sought a redivision of authority among the various officials. The position of the mayor was gradually improved, first by the grant of an annual stipend of \$400 in 1838, second by the provision for his popular election made in a state law of 1840 applying to all cities, next by the grant of a limited veto power in 1844, and finally, in 1847, by the power to appoint police officials. These changes modified the previously dominant authority of the council, while the creation of a separate

<sup>9</sup> *Democrat*, May 15, 1837; C. C. *Proc.*, May 23, Sept. 19, 1837; Gilbert, *op. cit.*, 151-154; O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, pp. 268-270, \*380.

<sup>10</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Mar. 27, 1838; *Democrat*, Mar. 8, 1838.

<sup>11</sup> Gilbert, Tables I-1, XI-1; see below.

<sup>12</sup> Rochester's limited achievements in the civic field contrasted more strikingly with local cultural and economic developments than with civic accomplishments in comparable American cities, yet even in the latter comparison Rochester appeared hesitant and retarded during the mid- and late-forties. See John A. Fairlie, *Municipal Administration* (New York, 1910), pp. 81-86, *passim*.

board of education likewise reduced the aldermen's prerogatives. But the frequent addition of new functions and the steady increase in the city's taxing authority maintained the influence of the council, though the gradual provision for 129 separate elective officers by the mid-century revealed Rochester's growing distrust of its representative body.<sup>13</sup>

Distrust was likewise displayed in the attempt to earmark the various revenues and to fix by charter the amounts to be expended on the different services. Despite the inability of any of the successive councils to live within the prescribed fiscal limits, authority for increased taxes was only reluctantly granted. At no time was the taxing power sufficient to enable the city to operate on a strictly legal basis. The tax limit advanced from \$8,000 to \$20,000 during the city's first decade, reaching \$28,000 by the mid-century, but both the tax levies and the normal expenditures exceeded these limits severalfold throughout the period.<sup>14</sup>

A major handicap was the lack of long-term, responsible leadership. The election of a fresh slate of aldermen every year produced inefficiencies only slightly mitigated by occasional second-termers, while the overlapping term of the mayor proved to be more a handicap than a benefit, especially in the early years, when the political allegiance of the council shifted almost annually. The creation of a superintendent of public works and other administrative officials presented an opportunity for increased efficiency, but in practice these officials were likewise replaced every year by inexperienced men. A charter amendment in 1837 provided two-year overlapping terms for the aldermen in an effort to secure more continuity, and two or three local party leaders sought repeated election to their former posts. Yet the only men to serve six consecutive years in any city office were the Democratic recorder, Isaac Hills, and the Whig alderman, Lewis Selye. Unfortunately, the value of the slower turnover in the forties was lost as the number of aldermen increased to eighteen and the total number of officials topped one hundred.<sup>15</sup>

Small wonder that Rochester's civic developments were occasionally halted and thrown into reverse amidst the babble of opinion produced by the hundred-odd aldermen who presided over the city during its

<sup>13</sup> W. Earl Weller, "The Development of the Charter of the City of Rochester, 1817 to 1938" (M. A. thesis at the Univ. Roch., 1938). I am greatly indebted to this thesis for accurate and specific information concerning the successive provisions affecting the early charter law of Rochester. See also W. E. Weller, "The Expanding Charter Life of Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XII, 75-82.

<sup>14</sup> Gilbert, Tables I, II, VII, and VIII; Weller, "Development of the Charter," pp. 77-78.

<sup>15</sup> William Peck, *Semi-Centennial History of Rochester* (Syracuse, 1884), pp. 184-199, presents full lists of most of the municipal officials for each year.

first fifteen years. Yet at least a dozen among the fifteen mayors of the period would appear in any list of its leading citizens. Their democratic ardor and individual resourcefulness piloted the community through many difficulties, performing several of its functions very creditably after the standards of the day.

The improvement and maintenance of its streets remained the city's most burdensome problem. The large expenditures in this field during the late thirties, overshadowing all other outlays, had greatly improved the condition of the central streets, giving Rochester a fair name in this respect among cities of its class by 1840. Some headway was also made with a campaign to line the streets with shade trees.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the marshland over which much of the city had been built provided a poor base for the macadam surface then in use. Great ruts quickly developed after each wet season, requiring extensive and costly repairs. Though an experiment with wooden blocks on State Street seemed to promise a satisfactory solution, a few years of heavy use proved discouraging.<sup>17</sup>

The council, appropriating several hundred dollars each spring for a thorough cleaning of the streets, generally depended upon the adjacent property owners to keep them in shape through the rest of the year. Yet they were frequently described in the public press as "in the most filthy condition possible."<sup>18</sup> Inadequate drainage remained a major difficulty, but whenever a drive started for extensive repairs, an opposing demand for economy appeared. As a result, the city's outlays for street maintenance and improvement averaged only \$16,000 annually during the forties, barely sufficient to keep the earlier improvements in condition.<sup>19</sup>

The city's sidewalks, bridges, and sewers were similarly neglected. Efforts to compel property owners to build and keep their sidewalks in repair met with indifferent success.<sup>20</sup> Shopkeepers in the center of town frequently obstructed the walks with produce or building materials, while the task of removing such impediments as outside stairways and signposts required constant vigilance.<sup>21</sup> The condition of the bridges

<sup>16</sup> *Rochester Gem and Ladies Amulet*, Apr. 30, 1836.

<sup>17</sup> *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Mar. 1, 1839; *Democrat*, Aug. 21, 1839; July 30, 1846. New York and Philadelphia had likewise experimented unsuccessfully with wooden blocks a few years before, and street paving remained an unsolved problem in most American cities at the mid-century. See George W. Tillson, *Street Pavements and Paving Materials* (New York, 1900), pp. 11-13.

<sup>18</sup> *Democrat*, July 12, 1839; Jan. 24, 1845; Aug. 25, 1846; *Roch. Republican*, Apr. 4, 1848.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert, pp. 110, 118, Table III, part 4; *Democrat*, Feb. 27, 1841; Jan. 24, 1845.

<sup>20</sup> Langworthy Scrapbook, II, 1, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>21</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 15, 1848; *Roch. Republican*, Apr. 4, 1848; *Advertiser*, Apr. 19, June 5, July 28, 1848.

roused repeated complaints, with only the newly constructed Clarissa Street bridge giving full satisfaction. Several fatal accidents occurred when late passers fell through gaps in the planking, while a broken axle or an injured horse was a frequent result of hurried passages over one or another of the four river bridges or the more numerous canal crossings.<sup>22</sup> The condition of the sewers was, if possible, even more deplorable. In 1848 Mayor Joseph Field condemned the failure of earlier officials to prepare a sewer plan or keep a sewer map showing the exact location of these essential drains, yet no remedy was provided at the time.<sup>23</sup> The unsatisfactory character of several of the sewers was disagreeably evident at numerous points, particularly during wet seasons when many cellars were flooded. The cost of an effective remedy forestalled such action, though new sewers were occasionally built.<sup>24</sup>

The sixty oil lamps scattered about the city during the mid-forties gave such a dim light that one humorous critic praised them for guarding late travelers from the danger of stumbling over the lamp posts.<sup>25</sup> At times the council felt impelled to stop the expenditure for oil, which averaged about \$400 annually. In 1848, however, when several of the community's more enterprising businessmen established a gas company, the argument that "Troy is about to emerge from darkness" by the use of gas prompted the Rochester council to approve a limited experiment with twelve open-flame gas lamps. Sixty lamps were provided the next year, increasing the cost to \$1,019, but Rochester could at least boast of being one among the half-dozen American cities enjoying gas lights before the mid-century.<sup>26</sup>

Several minor problems required action by the city fathers. Though Mayor Johnson recommended the construction of a city hall in 1838, the first attempt to bring the scattered offices together was not made until 1846, when two floors were rented in Everard Peck's building near the Court House.<sup>27</sup> The council acted more promptly after the burning of the bridge market in 1834, possibly because the outlay for the new market on Front Street was to be recovered from the anticipated stall

<sup>22</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 25, Apr. 4, 1835; Feb. 10, 1840; Feb. 1, July 14, 1843; Jan. 24, 1845.

<sup>23</sup> Gilbert, pp. 226-228; *Advertiser*, Oct. 21, 1848.

<sup>24</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 24, 1848; Jan. 31, 1849. Nevertheless, Rochester's sewers did not compare too unfavorably with those of most other American cities, except for Boston, where a model sewer system had been installed in the twenties. See Fairlie, *Municipal Administration*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>25</sup> R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Frank J. Leerburger, "The Development of the Gas Industry in Rochester," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Roch. Republican*, Mar. 28, 1848; *Advertiser*, Nov. 14, 1848; *Genesee Ohio*, Oct. 21, 1843; Fairlie, *Municipal Administration*, p. 282.

<sup>27</sup> C. C. *Proc.*, Mar. 8, 1838; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 16, Roch. Hist. Soc.

rentals. Both the new city market, costing \$35,000, and the hay scales procured at a cost of \$10,000 in 1843 were sound investments, netting a substantial return before their abandonment several years later.<sup>28</sup> The outlays on Mount Hope Cemetery were similarly justified by the returns from lot sales—not to mention that project's merits from the viewpoint of long-range civic planning.

The authorities displayed little foresight in connection with the proposal that the Falls Field on the east bank overlooking the main falls be acquired and preserved as a public promenade.<sup>29</sup> While neglecting that marvelous opportunity to safeguard one of the area's natural beauties, the council gave some attention to the six public squares donated to the city by various promoters. Several hundred trees were set out on these plots during the forties, apparently with less regard for their beauty than with the hope of stopping the ball games and militia reviews which disturbed nearby residents. Franklin Square frequently accommodated a political rally, but the prevailing theory of park usage appeared in the regulation which restrained anyone from opening the gates or otherwise trespassing on the public squares without written permission from the superintendent.<sup>30</sup>

The most serious instance of civic complacency was the failure to make any provision for a water system. Authority to raise funds for this purpose, granted in Rochester's first city charter, spurred study of the problem. Mayor Johnson presented a detailed plan in 1838 for a public water works to be constructed section by section as needed, with the total capital cost of \$150,000 spread over a period of years and the water rates pledged for the payment of the bonds. The savings enjoyed through a reduction in the excessive fire insurance rates would, Johnson argued, more than cancel the individual's water payments, leaving the health benefits and other assets as clear gain.<sup>31</sup> But the possibility of tapping a fairly steady flow of water at one or another of the rock ledges that could be found a few feet underground almost anywhere within the city favored a general reliance on private wells for domestic use. Accordingly, although most cities of its class developed public water

<sup>28</sup> Gilbert, Tables I and VIII. The clerk at the hay scales took in \$130.50 during December, 1844, for weighing 522 loads of hay, see *Democrat*, Jan. 11, 1845.

<sup>29</sup> O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. \*381.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 56; Samson Scrapbook, No. 65, p. 20, *Roch. Hist. Soc.*; *Genesee Farmer*, VIII (1847), 27; *Ordinances of the Common Council of the City of Rochester* (Rochester, 1844), ch. iii, sec. 22. Except for the New England village commons, forerunners of such public squares as Rochester boasted, the city park had scarcely appeared in America at the mid-century. Philadelphia had one, but New York City did not acquire Central Park until the fifties. See Fairlie, *Municipal Administration*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>31</sup> Elisha Johnson, *Report of the Mayor to the Common Council of the City of Rochester on the Subject of Supplying the City with Water* (Rochester, 1838).



works during these years,<sup>32</sup> Rochester contented itself with the numerous wells and available surface water.

The city paid dearly in mounting fire losses for this economy. The occasional fatal injury of a victim trapped in a flaming building added to the sorry record of property losses, which reached such a point by the mid-forties that they were said to exceed the per capita losses of every other city in the country.<sup>33</sup> By good fortune the flames never broke completely out of control. Apparently no single fire destroyed as many as a score of buildings, yet a half-dozen was not an unusual toll, while frequently a series of adjoining shops or an extended rookery was entirely consumed before the flames could be checked.<sup>34</sup> Several of the principal mills and factories, taverns and business blocks, homes and churches were among the structures lost, though the most frequent victim was the backyard stable.<sup>35</sup> The annual damages averaged around \$80,000 during the mid-forties, increasing as the decade advanced until two dry months in the late summer of 1849 brought a succession of fires whose ravages equalled the previous annual average.<sup>36</sup>

Insurance rates mounted until the estimated annual premiums reached \$20,000. But when the city council (investigating a proposal that a municipal insurance company be established in order to reap a benefit from these outlays) discovered that still larger damages were collected each year, the project to insure Rochester was shelved as a bad risk.<sup>37</sup> When the enlargement of several underground reservoirs and the redoubled efforts of the firemen failed to check either the increasing fire losses or the mounting insurance rates, William A. Reynolds installed one of "Hubbard's patent Rotating Engines" in the Hydraulic Building ready, in case of fire, to pump water from the raceway through iron pipes under Main Street into the \$100,000 Arcade Building where a private watchman stood guard at all times.<sup>38</sup>

The volunteer fire companies had meanwhile increased to ten, with a total enrollment of approximately three hundred men. The companies frequently staged colorful parades, one club sporting red shirts and skull caps while another wore blue sailors' middies. The annual fire-

<sup>32</sup> Johnson, *Report of the Mayor*, pp. 4-5; J. N. Larned, *History of Buffalo* (New York, 1911), I, 156-159; II, 269; Bessie L. Pierce, *A History of Chicago* (New York, 1937), I, 352-353; Fairlie, pp. 273-274.

<sup>33</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 15, 1845; The Newspaper Index lists 13 fire fatalities during the forties.

<sup>34</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 3, 1842; *Roch. Republican*, Nov. 7, 1843; *Democrat*, July 3, 1845; Aug. 21, 1846; June 1, 1848.

<sup>35</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 7, 1840; Feb. 29, 1848; *Democrat*, Feb. 18, 1846; Jan. 11, 1849.

<sup>36</sup> *Advertiser*, Oct. 1, 4, 13, 1849.

<sup>37</sup> *C. C. Proc.*, Aug. 7, 1838.

<sup>38</sup> William A. Reynolds to N. Gray, Esq., Rochester, June 8, 1850, Wm. A. Reynolds Letter Book, MS, R. P. L.

men's reviews supplied excitement as each company strove to pump a stream of water higher than its fellows,<sup>39</sup> but they never gave entire satisfaction at the scene of a fire. Despite the election of responsible foremen, riots occasionally broke out between rival companies.<sup>40</sup> The Ever Ready Neptune Bucket Company No. 1, a group of lads of sixteen and seventeen years,<sup>41</sup> was not the only company to display insubordination when its ambitions for better equipment were disregarded. A temperance campaign among the firemen prompted sixteen to take the pledge, while arrangements were made to distribute hot coffee instead of beer and brandy at the fires,<sup>42</sup> yet the fires continued to rage.

The council devoted considerable attention to the fire companies. A new engine was purchased from Lewis Selye every two or three years, a hose company was organized and equipped, and fire houses were provided for each of the ten companies by the mid-century.<sup>43</sup> So elaborate had the equipment become by 1843 that a visitor from Buffalo felt constrained to recognize the superiority of the Flour City's fire department, though he kept discreetly silent about the sixteen miles of water pipes that facilitated the work of the Buffalo fire companies.<sup>44</sup> While the city's expenditures in this field rose from an average of \$3853 during the late thirties to \$5836 during the late forties, the fire losses increased much more rapidly.<sup>45</sup> The five fire alarms sounded one April day in 1846 provided unusual excitement, but the big Main Street fire of 1849, which destroyed an entire block on the north side between St. Paul and Clinton streets, was the largest fire to date, inciting much criticism. One editor noted that Boston, four times the size of Rochester, suffered fire losses that September barely 5 per cent as great as those of Rochester—chiefly because of Boston's efficient water works.<sup>46</sup>

Reluctance to face the real issue continued, as most property owners seemed ready to take their chances with the fire hazard rather than pay the taxes necessary for a water system. When, however, the losses increased, reaching most of the leaders, resentment flared against suspected fire bugs and those who sounded false alarms so frequently that the efficiency of the fire companies was impaired.<sup>47</sup> Though rewards were

<sup>39</sup> *Democrat*, May 25, 1839; *Advertiser*, Aug. 20, Nov. 5, 1841; Sept. 22, 1843.

<sup>40</sup> *Rochester Daily Sun*, July 10, 1839; *Democrat*, Jan. 31, 1842; *C. C. Proc.*, July 3, 1845; "Reminiscences of J. L. H. Mosier," *Union and Advertiser*, Feb. 12, 1884.

<sup>41</sup> Ever Ready Neptune Bucket Co. No. 1 Minute Book, 1837-1839, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Advertiser*, Feb. 3, 1842.

<sup>42</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 2, 17, 1843.

<sup>43</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 5, 1834; *Advertiser*, Dec. 14, 1842; June 18, 1847.

<sup>44</sup> *Advertiser*, June 29, 1843; Larned, *History of Buffalo*, I, 156-159.

<sup>45</sup> Gilbert, *Government and Finances*, pp. 81-82, Table II-1.

<sup>46</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 13, 1846; Sept. 28, 29, Oct. 4, 5, 1849.

<sup>47</sup> *Advertiser*, May 12, 1840.

offered for the detection of such offenders and other precautions redoubled, the results proved discouraging. By the mid-century the hungry flames had consumed the congested Dublin Castle, Ann Street tenement, and other dilapidated rookeries hastily erected during the boom twenties, as well as many more reputable establishments, including the historic Mansion House and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the most elegant in the city.<sup>48</sup>

### DIVIDED RESPONSIBILITY

As responsibility for a wide variety of civic functions was loosely distributed between city, county, and state authorities, many services were neglected, or poorly performed, or left to charitable agencies. Public health gained little attention until near the close of the period; the poor and the unfortunate received occasional but indifferent assistance; only the handling of lawbreakers displayed decision. The problems in each case were becoming more complex and insistent, with urban rather than village solution foreshadowed, though the increased desire for economy delayed their realization.

After the close of its boom days, Rochester was generally able to take pride in the good order and restraint of its citizens. Under the terms of the first city charter, three regular night watchmen, a captain of the watch, and five constables sufficed to guard the city, particularly the lamp and watch district. The night watchmen soon increased to seven, arousing the protests of economy advocates, though the value of a prompt report of fires was appreciated.<sup>49</sup> Each watchman, provided with a special hat, symbol of his authority, received a modest allowance, while the constables kept the fees collected in their capacity as petty court officers. With the city's growth these police services expanded, prompting a transfer of their supervision to the mayor in 1847.<sup>50</sup> The cost increased from \$451 in 1834 to \$3,953 fifteen years later, though Rochester had by that date only one full-time watchman on day duty.<sup>51</sup>

The city's changing character appeared in its police records. Convictions for criminal offenses in Monroe County increased in number from slightly over forty each year in the early thirties to one hundred by the mid-century. The county exceeded its "mean or true proportion" of convictions over a period of years in the thirties, rivalling New York and Albany for the unwanted distinction of possessing the highest criminal ratio in the state. Assault and battery proved the most frequent charge,

<sup>48</sup> *Advertiser*, July 17, 1845; *Democrat*, July 3, 1845; Aug. 21, 1846; *Roch. Republican*, May 5, 1844; July 27, 1847.

<sup>49</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Mar. 6, 1836; *Democrat*, June 28, 1837.

<sup>50</sup> *Ordinances of the City of Rochester and Amendments to the City Charter* (Rochester, 1848), pp. 129-131.

<sup>51</sup> Gilbert, Table II.

but less violent social offenses, as keeping a bawdy house or selling liquor without a license, accounted for an increased number of convictions.<sup>52</sup>

The Watch Books were filled with the records of petty offenders. As the number of questionable strangers requiring the surveillance of the guard now regularly increased during the summer months, it no longer seemed possible to depend on volunteer watchmen at that season. Thus the thirty-odd arrests during the winter months in the late thirties doubled with the return of warm weather. These numbers rose as the forties advanced, despite the more favorable times, but the increase was not so rapid as the city's growth, and an actual drop occurred in the number of vagrants confined in jail overnight for the want of a home.<sup>53</sup> Those booked on charges of drunkenness—not listed as an offense in the thirties—exceeded all others a decade later, suggesting that many of the shiftless misfits, who in earlier days had sometimes moved on toward the not too distant frontier, were by the mid-century acclimating themselves after a fashion to urban life.

The county jail, now completely surrounded by the city, was forced to expand in order to accommodate its inmates, 728 of whom were committed in 1849 as against 435 five years before. Fortunately, from the housing viewpoint, the terms were short, for the jail cells numbered sixty, with seven rooms for females and special cases, though double these numbers were frequently confined.<sup>54</sup> A rock pile within the jail yard and road repair in the vicinity supplied labor for the convicts, while the services of a chaplain and a physician were occasionally provided.<sup>55</sup> One observer in 1838 praised the cleanliness and discipline found in the Rochester jail and commended the plan for an inmates' library, but the jail's most famous prisoner, William Lyon Mackenzie, leader of the Canadian Rebellion, blasted petulantly against the damp marshy surroundings and intolerable restraints of what he dignified as the American Bastille.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Senate *Doc.* (1838), No. 65; (1848), No. 193; (1850), No. 195. Of 63 convictions in 1834, only 2 kept a bawdy house, while in 1847 that charge accounted for 12 out of 72, and in 1849, 6 out of 101, with 17 committed for selling liquor without a license at the latter date.

<sup>53</sup> Watch Books (1836-1838), MSS in Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Democrat*, Aug. 10, 1839; Oct. 27, 1841; Apr. 18, 1845; Apr. 7, 1848.

<sup>54</sup> *Advertiser*, Sept. 30, 1844; Jan. 20, 1849; Jan. 9, 1850; *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 25, 1849; Monroe County Board of Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849* (Rochester, 1892), p. 165.

<sup>55</sup> *Monroe County Board of Supervisors, Proceedings: 1821-1849*, pp. 129, 141, 192, 214-215, 248, 260, 279, 295.

<sup>56</sup> William Wood to Henry O'Reilly, Canandaigua, Jan. 14, 1840; William L. Mackenzie to Henry O'Reilly, Rochester Jail, 9 letters, O'Reilly *Doc.*, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Charles Lindsay, *The Life and Times of William L. Mackenzie* (Toronto, 1862), quoted in Samson Scrapbook, No. 51, p. 72; *Democrat*, Dec. 28, 1843.

Despite the obvious exaggeration in Mackenzie's complaints, the jail house scarcely answered the needs of the increasing number of homeless boys gathered in by the officers. Agitation for a correctional institution to care for these lads prompted the state in 1849 to open the Western House of refuge, the fourth institution of its kind in the country, on Rochester's northwestern outskirts.<sup>57</sup>

A grand jury found it necessary in 1839 to recommend special cells for the segregation of women in the jail.<sup>58</sup> Occasionally a woman was committed on a charge of thievery, but more frequently the watch would bring in one "Jane Van Buren," "Cornelia Sherman," or some other Negro or white lass pulled out of bed with a nameless male who generally escaped into the night. Repeated attempts were made to close "Mrs. Brown's" or "Mrs. Smith's" disorderly house. Between 10 and 20 per cent of all local arrests involved women, one of them being found in the street in man's clothing and another "having a red face."<sup>59</sup> Efforts to curb the activities of these wayward women continued with little success throughout the period, and not until the mid-century was a Home for the Friendless provided by charitable folk desiring to meliorate the situation.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, two sensational crimes stirred the community to its depths. The first murder occurred in October, 1837, when William Lyman, treasurer of the Carthage Railroad, was robbed and killed, apparently by eighteen-year-old Octavius Barron, who was quickly apprehended, tried amidst great excitement, and finally hanged in the jail yard.<sup>61</sup> A second murder took place in the city before Barron's execution, several others were reported during the forties,<sup>62</sup> occasional jail-breaks were effected, and two minor riots developed,<sup>63</sup> but none of these events roused the excitement produced by the alleged seduction of a sixteen-year-old girl by her pastor. Popular discussion of the flimsy evidence failed to subside, even after the conviction of the accused, while testimonials prepared by both sides for the Bishop kept the case before the public for several months.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Western House of Refuge, *First Annual Report* (Albany, 1850).

<sup>58</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 28, 1838; *Sun*, July 1, 1839.

<sup>59</sup> Watch Books, 1838.

<sup>60</sup> *Seventh Ann. Rept. of the Rochester Home for the Friendless* (Rochester, 1856).

<sup>61</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Oct. 31, 1837; June 12, 1838; William F. Peck, *History of the Police Department of Rochester, N. Y.* (Rochester, 1903), pp. 72-78.

<sup>62</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 16, 1842; Mar. 16, 1847; *Roch. Republican*, Apr. 4, 1848; *Advertiser*, Aug. 25, 1848.

<sup>63</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 4, 1844; *Advertiser*, June 10, 1846; *Roch. Republican*, Oct. 5, 1847.

<sup>64</sup> *The Volunteer*, July 24, 1841; *Democrat*, July 24, Dec. 31, 1841; Jan. 19, 1842; *Roch. Republican*, July 27, Sept. 21, 1841; Oct. 10, 1843; Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Dec. 31, 1841; Jan. 19, 1842, E. S. S. Eaton Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Elizabeth Selden Rogers, New York City.

A more serious problem was that of the poor folk forced to beg for bread during the dark years of the depression. As forthright action appeared necessary, plans were drawn for a workhouse where the "indolent poor," as they were described, could receive correctional treatment. Bonds sold to finance the institution enabled purchase of a lot, but nothing further was accomplished.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, when the aid given through public work projects in the early years of the depression was shut off by the economy drive, resort was made to direct relief payments, which never fell below \$5,000 a year during the forties and mounted slowly to \$13,420 by the close of the decade.<sup>66</sup> The overseers of the poor, who distributed this fund, generally in the form of outdoor relief, faced constant attack both from humanitarians and from economy advocates.<sup>67</sup> Though the sums were modest enough, neither viewpoint predominated; thus the per capita cost of city relief rose from 24 cents in 1834 to 37 cents in 1837, falling to 27 cents in 1846, yet by the mid-century, chiefly because of the hardships resulting from the cholera epidemic, the cost had turned upward again.<sup>68</sup>

Despite its many flaws, the county almshouse located in Brighton, a mile south of the city, provided a measure of relief. After an abortive movement in the late thirties to sell the old site and develop a new institution, several additions were built to accommodate the overcrowded population.<sup>69</sup> A succession of fires in 1842 and 1846 not only cost several lives but also greatly increased the congestion in the remaining quarters until the rebuilding operations were completed.<sup>70</sup> Cholera reaped a rich harvest among the inmates in 1849. Yet the institution continued to operate throughout the period, and in 1847 its officers reported one marriage, 18 births, and 75 deaths among the 1,178 enrolled during the year.<sup>71</sup> Though provisions raised on the farm helped to keep down the expenses of the large family, which averaged over two hundred a day, a total of \$13,017.80 was expended for maintenance that year, showing a 20 per cent increase over 1846, occasioned chiefly, it was explained, by the larger number of immigrants requiring assistance.<sup>72</sup>

The most successful institution established during the period was the Rochester Orphan Asylum. Leadership came from a group of charitable women who opened a temporary asylum on April 1, 1837, in a small house on Sophia Street, starting with nine children transferred from

<sup>65</sup> Papers on the Workhouse (1838), MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Democrat*, July 14, Sept. 24, 25, 1839.

<sup>66</sup> Gilbert, Tables II and III.

<sup>67</sup> C. C. *Proc.*, Oct. 10, 1843; *Democrat*, May 16, 1845.

<sup>68</sup> Gilbert, pp. 88-93.

<sup>69</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 20, Dec. 3, 23, 1836; Jan. 14, 1841.

<sup>70</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Feb. 22, 1842; *Democrat*, Mar. 2, 1846; July 30, 31, 1849; Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, p. 261.

<sup>71</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Feb. 8, 1848; *Advertiser*, Jan. 12, 1849, Jan. 11, 1850.

<sup>72</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 3, 1847; Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, p. 355.

the almshouse. Soon a charter was secured and larger quarters, accommodating some thirty youngsters, were occupied in Cornhill. The gift of a more favorable site in the southern part of the city spurred a drive for funds, and after much earnest labor, particularly by the wives of Chester Dewey and Thomas H. Rochester, a new home facing Hubbell Park stood ready for its young occupants early in 1844.<sup>73</sup> While this institution was beginning its long and useful career, supported largely by charitable Protestants, local Catholics were busy raising funds for the Rochester Catholic Asylum for girls back of St. Patrick's Church. The asylum opened in 1842, and three years later the Sisters of Charity arrived from Emmetsburg, Maryland, to take charge, supporting the institution in part by annual fairs.<sup>74</sup> Rochester thus equipped itself with two creditable orphan asylums before the mid-century.

Though occasional insane persons were lodged in the jail when they became troublesome, or if destitute in the almshouse, for the most part these unfortunates, as well as the deaf, dumb, and blind, depended upon the care given by their family or church friends. The state provided some relief in 1845 when the State Lunatic Asylum at Utica admitted a limited number from each county on payment of the prescribed \$20 annual fees. A similar provision for the reception of deaf, dumb, and blind pupils at the New York Institution prompted Monroe County to send five there in 1845 and six to Utica. But Rochester was credited with thirty-five such folk by the State Census that year, when the county totalled 140, and neither public charity nor medical science was prepared to give them much attention.<sup>75</sup>



In many respects the most neglected of community affairs was public health. Only in times of emergency did the city become actively concerned, and then the measures adopted seldom proved effective. The lack of a public water system remained a serious handicap, greatly complicating the sanitary problem. No real progress could be hoped for while the economy advocates were in the saddle.

Under the charter's health provision, small outlays were made to combat a minor cholera epidemic in 1834, but the board soon became inactive. A campaign to see that all cellars and outhouses were properly

<sup>73</sup> *Assembly Journal* (1838), pp. 312, 708; J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, Dec. 21, 1841, Oct. 24, 1843, Schermerhorn Letters, in possession of Mrs. Rudolph Stanley-Brown, Washington, D. C., photostats, Roch. Pub. Library; *The Orphan's Souvenir* (Rochester, 1843).

<sup>74</sup> Margaret Frawley, "A History of Charitable Institutions in Rochester," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Democrat*, Oct. 13, 1841; Mar. 18, Nov. 28, 1844; May 29, 1845; Mar. 21, 1848.

<sup>75</sup> N. Y. State Census (1845); Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, pp. 310, 311, 314.

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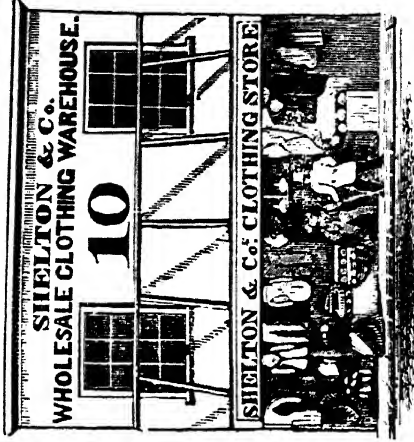
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limes started under its authority in 1839, and several years later the board's advice was sought on the regulations to be applied to slaughter-houses.<sup>76</sup> Yet only the news of the spread of cholera through Europe in 1848 awakened the authorities in Rochester. The revitalized board of health, directing hotels and lodging houses to report all sick travelers, hastily made plans for a city hospital.<sup>77</sup> Warnings were sounded against the numerous grog shops, and a drive started that fall was renewed the next spring to clean up the gutters, drains, and canal basins, as well as private cellars, wells, and cesspools.<sup>78</sup> Despite an epidemic of dysentery the board rejoiced the next May to report a year of exceptionally good health,<sup>79</sup> but June brought the first attack of the dread scourge.

As in 1832, Rochester was woefully unprepared to cope with a serious epidemic. When the protests of neighbors against the location of a city "hospital" in the Fifth Ward prompted its removal to the Eighth Ward in the spring of 1849, residents in the latter area responded by applying the torch. Though an award of \$500 sought the identity of the incendiary, repeated efforts to find another suitable building failed, and the community was fortunate at the last moment to secure a temporary shelter for its first cholera victims some distance north of the town overlooking the gorge. There, many hoped, the lake breezes would dilute the dangerous cholera vapors.<sup>80</sup>

For some reason the first onslaught of the plague early in June slackened toward the close of the month. Renewed confidence stimulated protests against the official cancellation of the customary celebration of the Fourth, but when the fatalities multiplied in July and August, popular indifference disappeared, causing many to flee the city.<sup>81</sup> The sale of fresh fruit and vegetables was prohibited, and frantic complaints indicted the several disreputable shanties and rookeries where the inhabitants appeared to die like flies. The torch was put to Brown's Block on Main Street soon after five died there in six days, while the board of health found the tenements of the Shamrock House on Market Street "so foul in every part as to be unfit for the habitation of human beings.

<sup>76</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 9, 1835; Jan. 4, 1837; July 3, 6, 1839; *Rock. Republican*, June 18, 1839; *Advertiser*, July 21, 1845.

<sup>77</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 29, Apr. 25, Dec. 12, 1848. Public health boards elsewhere likewise depended upon recurrent epidemics for popular support; see Fairlie, *Municipal Administration*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>78</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 12, 1848, May 31, June 1, 1849.

<sup>79</sup> *Democrat*, May 22, June 8, 1849; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 179-180, 228-229.

<sup>80</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 30, 1834; Apr. 18, 27, 1848; July 13, 21, 1849; Jan. 10, 1850; *Advertiser*, Apr. 25, 1848; June 8, 15, 27, July 13, 1849; Betsey C. Corner, "A Century of Medicine in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 358-359.

<sup>81</sup> Alfred G. Mudge to Lewis Selye, Rochester, June-September, 1849, MSS, Autograph Collection, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Advertiser*, June 8, 20, July 18, 1849.

. . . The wonder is that any of the wretched group escaped.”<sup>82</sup> The total number of deaths attributed to the plague (including twenty-four transients) was 161, the great majority of them Irish and German immigrants crowded together in unsanitary hovels.<sup>83</sup> Yet one of the victims, Dr. Wilson D. Fish, fell in the course of professional duty, and a sufficient number of fatalities occurred throughout the city to make the epidemic a terrifying ordeal to the 35,000 inhabitants.<sup>84</sup>

In face of this emergency the city fathers hastily loosened the purse strings. Following an expenditure of \$85 on public health in 1843, the economy-minded community had avoided further outlays of that sort until 1848, when \$465 was expended. The next year saw the outlay increased tenfold, with most of the \$5095 going into the makeshift hospital where transient and other destitute cholera victims received free treatment. Nevertheless, soon after the last case had cleared up and the arrival of cold weather dispelled fear of the plague's renewal, the hospital closed and the community slipped back into its more comfortable disregard of sanitary ordinances.<sup>85</sup>

If a spirit of lassitude characterized many of its services, the city at least achieved a remarkable record of economy. The policy first gained effect in 1840, when the total outlays were cut from \$109,788 to \$56,768—a 50 per cent economy per person. As the public services could not accommodate themselves to such a drastic reduction, a steady though moderate rise brought the outlay up to \$86,845 by 1844. Democratic Mayor Isaac Hills declared in 1843 that “there is but one view on this subject, that this community cannot sustain the weight of taxation,” yet his own outlays brought a new increase.<sup>86</sup> Local Whigs, abandoning their policy of internal improvements, sought to outdo the economy Democrats, and under their auspices during the late forties, despite moderate advances in the total outlays, the per capita expenditures were brought down to \$2.66 by 1849, well below the \$3.42 of 1844 and less than half the \$5.80 of 1839.<sup>87</sup>

A growing proportion of the outlays came from regular tax sources, and while these appeared to bear with increasing weight upon local property, the hardship was not so great as the figures implied. The tax rate per \$1,000 in 1835 was \$4.58, mounting gradually to \$10.24 by 1849, while the local assessment rate fell during the same period from \$8.61 to \$2.63.<sup>88</sup> But these figures reveal only half the story, since the

<sup>82</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 30, Sept. 15, 1849; Jan. 5, 1850; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 173, 228-229.

<sup>83</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 12, 1849.

<sup>84</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 28, 1849; Jan. 5, 1850; *Democrat*, Dec. 12, 1849.

<sup>85</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 19, 1850; *Advertiser*, Oct. 4, 1850; Gilbert, Table II.

<sup>86</sup> *C. C. Proc.*, Mar. 10, 1843; Gilbert, pp. 109-112, 114-118, 153-156.

<sup>87</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 22, 30, 1844; Gilbert, Table I.

<sup>88</sup> Gilbert, Table IX.

inefficient work of the fifteen assessors, chosen annually with few reëlections, had practically stabilized Rochester's assessed valuation throughout the period. After the rise from \$3,010,000 to \$4,432,000 between 1835 and 1840, the assessed valuation advanced slowly to \$5,073,000 by 1850—an increase of 70 per cent during the fifteen years, as compared with a population growth more than twice as large. That something was awry with the standards of the assessors appeared the very next year, when the valuation suddenly doubled.<sup>89</sup>

The economy advocates likewise achieved a sharp reduction of the municipal debt. The great activity of the late thirties had accumulated a net debt of \$126,339 by 1839, or \$6.68 per capita. By dint of rigid economy and a generally increased tax levy, this debt was reduced to \$123,538 or \$5.14 per capita in 1843, when Rochester was accredited with the second lowest per capita debt among the seventeen principal cities of the Union. As the retrenchment program had then barely started, further economies cut the debt to \$66,676 in 1850, or \$1.83 per capita.<sup>90</sup>

Only a polite disregard of the taxing restraints imposed by the charter made this achievement possible. Though added revenue sources appeared from time to time, the annually increased tax levies showed little relation to the charter provisions; indeed, at no time did the latter approach the sums collected. The \$20,000 limit under the 1844 charter advanced by varied amendments to \$28,000 in 1849, and by a new charter in 1850 to \$35,000, yet the tax levies for these years were \$33,000, and \$50,880, and \$70,063 respectively.<sup>91</sup> These levies did not, however, include the miscellaneous taxes, whose gross declined sharply, chiefly because of reduced activity in the field of public improvements. As a result the per capita tax showed a slight rise, while the per capita local assessments trended in the opposite direction sufficiently to stabilize the burden.<sup>92</sup>

Never again would the dream of the budget-balancers be so closely approximated as at the mid-century. The city fathers were still content to draw their water from shallow, backyard wells, sending their housekeepers out to sweep the gravel streets, and their sons to fight the recurrent fires with gasping hand pumps. Some doubts appeared concerning the adequacy of these provisions, especially after the destruction wrought by the successive fires and epidemics of the late forties. The city of Troy, frequently praised in Rochester for the enterprise

<sup>89</sup> Gilbert, Table I; *Democrat*, Jan. 9, 1841; Feb. 19, 1845.

<sup>90</sup> Leroy A. Shattuck, *Municipal Indebtedness* (Baltimore, 1940), p. 15, quoting from the *U. S. Magazine and Democratic Review*, XII (1843), 212; Gilbert, Table XI.

<sup>91</sup> Weller, "Development of the Charter," pp. 77-78, 83-84; Gilbert, Table VIII.

<sup>92</sup> Gilbert, Table IX.

of its industrialists, ventured to pile up a debt nearly ten times that of the Flour City without checking the courage of its smaller population, while Buffalo was speeding past Rochester in municipal improvements as in so many other respects at the mid-century.<sup>93</sup> The need for a new policy in Rochester appeared only too evident, yet it was most frequently argued that the real negligence resided in the county and state authorities. Quite unjustly the quaint little courthouse served as the chief butt for local critics.<sup>94</sup>



As a matter of fact, despite the additional functions assumed by the city, the county remained the big brother in local government. Responsibility for the city streets and schools was readily surrendered by the county authorities, who found the administration of those affairs in the remaining towns sufficiently burdensome. Indeed, the supervisors would gladly have surrendered other responsibilities as well, notably that of building and repairing the numerous bridges, for each town had its pet bridge project, though none wished to be taxed for that of its neighbor. The debate over the reconstruction of the main bridge at Rochester became so protracted that the city finally, in 1837, proceeded with the task itself. The supervisors, who ultimately paid most of this bill, assisted with frequent repairs of that bridge as well as those at Court and Clarissa streets and at Carthage, yet on each occasion the initiative had to be assumed by the city.<sup>95</sup>

The jealousies which naturally developed between the various towns over the location of a road, a bridge, or an institution flared into the open at the semi-annual and special meetings of the supervisors. The representation of the city, because of its more rapid growth, increased from three to five during the mid-thirties, but later demands for additional supervisors were resisted by the towns, fearful lest the city, which numbered three-eighths of the county's population by the mid-century, would dominate the board. There was, however, little prospect of such domination at the time, for not only were the five Rochester supervisors easily outvoted by the eighteen country members, but also the ablest leadership generally came from the latter group—chiefly, no doubt, because of the frequency with which many townsmen sought and secured reflection, in contrast to the rotation of office practiced in Rochester. The city, fortunately, derived some benefit from the situation, for several of these officials were drawn more closely into Rochester's affairs by their frequent visits on county business, some ultimately making it their residence—the most notable example being

<sup>93</sup> Arthur J. Weise, *Troy's One Hundred Years* (Troy, 1891), p. 345; Larned, *History of Buffalo*, *passim*.

<sup>94</sup> *Democrat*, May 15, 1841; Dec. 13, 1849; Aug. 1, 1850.

<sup>95</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, pp. 129, 146, 148, 159, 164, 166-167, 194.

the removal of Hiram Sibley from West Mendon to Rochester after a brief term in the mid-forties as county sheriff.<sup>96</sup>

The growing jealousy between the city and the surrounding towns was accentuated by the popular demand for economy. Though the first two decades witnessed a steady advance in the assessment valuations of the several towns, until the county's total reached \$15,661,769 in 1841, each of the next half-dozen years saw a reduction in the figure reported by practically every town and the city wards as well. By the mid-century the total valuation fell more than \$2,000,000 below that of a decade previous.<sup>97</sup> As landowners displaced land promoters in positions of authority, the county as well as the city attempted to retrench. Perhaps it was only a coincidence that Nathaniel T. Rochester, having long since returned from his dashing European excursion of the early thirties, was now writing out his full middle name, *Thrift*, when signing official reports in his capacity as Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, a position he held throughout the forties.

The increasing volume of official business presented a serious problem. Though both plans were suggested, neither splitting the county in two with the river as a dividing line nor making the city an independent county offered a prospect of efficiency or economy.<sup>98</sup> It was found expedient, however, to divide the county into two districts for school supervision and into three assembly districts for polling purposes.<sup>99</sup> An early demand for a new courthouse, prompted by the inadequacy of the existing structure, was put off when various outside accommodations became available. Thus, the county in 1835 acquired possession of Dr. Elwood's small building, located on one corner of the courthouse plot, and twelve years later took over the similar building of Vincent Mathews on the other corner;<sup>100</sup> yet these additions and the construction of a fireproof clerk's office in 1836 only deferred the day when a new courthouse would be a positive requirement. As the forties drew to a close the supervisors were forced to take action. The first plan called for a modest structure to cost only \$30,000, but popular indignation at such short-sighted economy soon prompted a revision of plans, and by the mid-century a quite substantial courthouse, surmounted by a dome, was in process of erection on the old site.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849, passim*; Hiram W. Sibley, "Memories of Hiram Sibley," R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 127-134.

<sup>97</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, pp. 248, 395, *passim*. The city's assessment total was not reduced, but the slow advance was in effect a reduction when the increased area and population were considered; see above, p. 259.

<sup>98</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, pp. 279, 281-282; *Advertiser*, Oct. 17, 1843; Dec. 11, 1845.

<sup>99</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, p. 275; *Advertiser*, Nov. 21, 1845.

<sup>100</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, pp. 141, 142, 378.

<sup>101</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, p. 163; *Democrat*, May 15, 1841; Dec. 13, 1849; Aug. 1, 1850; *Advertiser*, Mar. 28, 1850.

No doubt the most distinguished public leadership was that provided by a group of able judges who presided over the community's legal affairs. Three Democrats, Samuel L. Selden, Ashley Samson, and Patrick Buchan, served successively as First Judge of the County Court during the thirties and forties, and while the rapid increase in litigation frequently congested their dockets, the community enjoyed the benefit of their even-handed justice.<sup>102</sup> Appeals were nevertheless increasingly numerous, and thanks to Thurlow Weed's early friendship, the able Democrat, Addison Gardiner, served as a Rochester representative in the Eighth District of the State Circuit Court during most of the thirties. When the pressure of increased business compelled the appointment of a vice-chancellor for this growing district in 1839, the leading Whig, Frederick Whittlesey, secured the appointment, holding it until the constitutional revision of 1846. Under the new arrangement, which transferred Monroe County to the Seventh District, Samuel L. Selden was elected as the Rochester member of its four-man panel. Addison Gardiner was at the same time elected to the state's highest tribunal, the Court of Appeals, where he served with ability until 1856.<sup>103</sup>

The long terms of these judicial officers were matched by few other officials during the period, the district attorney and the county treasurer being noteworthy exceptions. The election of Lewis Selye to the latter office in 1847 brought into the county service an able executive, who soon placed its financial affairs on a sound basis. With an effort to collect back taxes, renewed after a long lapse during the depression years,<sup>104</sup> the county girded itself for a more vigorous performance of its functions in the years ahead.

There was an incentive other than glory to attract able men into local office, since the fees frequently added up to handsome sums. Thus the clerk of the chancery court in 1837 averaged ten dollars on each of the 99 bills recorded that September and calculated upon an income of \$6000.<sup>105</sup> In the case of the judges, whose position redounded to their reputation as lawyers, a direct advantage was likewise evident. When in 1847 an effort to place such essential posts as that of the district attorney, the county clerk, and the judges on a regular salary basis raised the salary of the First Judge from \$500 to \$1500, an outburst of

<sup>102</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 22, 1843; Dec. 9, 1848; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 24; Judge P. G. Buchan, "Memoirs and Sundry Writings," Buchan Scrapbook; Samson Note Book, X, 359-360.

<sup>103</sup> Peck, *Semi-Centennial History of Rochester*, pp. 366-377; Addison Gardiner: *In Memoriam* (Rochester, 1883).

<sup>104</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 26, 1848.

<sup>105</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Nov. 17, 1837, Jan. 19, 1842, E. S. S. Eaton Letters. "Judge" Selden's private law practice, which occupied but part of his attention in 1841, netted him \$1200 for the year.

criticism brought the figure down to \$1000, considered more in line with the standards of a democratic community.<sup>106</sup>

Only when an ambitious man saw an opportunity to build up a political following through the retention of office was an effort made to break down the tradition of rotation. This situation developed in the post office at an early date, as the successive incumbents played an active part in local politics, each seeking to block the campaign that soon developed for his removal. Yet the potentialities of this and similar Federal posts for political influence were small, and although the local Democratic minority was doubtless strengthened by control of the post office for twelve out of sixteen years during the period, the volume of patronage proved meager indeed. Local judgeships likewise fell for the most part to Democrats, but this had the effect of removing some of the party's ablest leaders from political activity. The direction of Whig forces by Thurlow Weed from distant Albany received support locally from Frederick Whittlesey, though both were chiefly concerned with state and national politics. It was not until the mid-forties, when Lewis Selye emerged as the guiding spirit in local Whig circles, that the community began to enjoy a measure of the leadership lacking since the death or withdrawal of the early village fathers.<sup>107</sup>

#### PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL ADVANCES

Education was the civic field in which Rochester made its most creditable advance during the period. The county gradually surrendered full control to the city, and the latter, spurred by emerging democratic forces, achieved real progress in the development of a public school system during the mid-forties. Moreover, the community enjoyed the services of several private academies. The enterprise of a few able educators, generously backed by interested citizens, not only provided the youth of the city with advantages comparable to those of other cities, but also helped to supply facilities for the edification of adults in line with nation-wide trends at the mid-century.<sup>108</sup>

Yet these achievements must have seemed far in the future to the small group of public-spirited citizens who advocated educational reforms in the mid-thirties. Dissatisfaction with the old district school system had been one of the arguments for a city charter,<sup>109</sup> and that document gave a measure of control over the districts to the common council. Nevertheless, that body, preoccupied with other affairs, found little

<sup>106</sup> Assembly Doc. (1840), No. 21; Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, p. 344.

<sup>107</sup> See the numerous letters to Lewis Selye scattered through the Autograph Collection, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>108</sup> Sidney L. Jackson, *America's Struggle for Free Schools* (Washington, 1941).

<sup>109</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 19, 1834.



time for its educational duties. Though five school inspectors were appointed, the district trustees remained directly responsible for each school, and it was only at their request that the council occasionally levied an extra tax for repairs or for a new building. Indeed, the council itself, lacking the power to levy a general school tax, could only recommend to the county supervisors the sums desired—sums usually calculated just to match the state funds.<sup>110</sup>

Occasionally a district mustered courage to attack its own problems. Thus old Gates District No. 2, now renamed Rochester No. 1, responsible for the most densely populated area of the city, renewed earlier efforts to secure a new building. As a major reason for delay had been the fear that a later revision of the district boundaries would deprive many property holders of their investment in the school, a bill was introduced at Albany to obviate this danger.<sup>111</sup> Finally in May, 1835, despite the defeat of its bill, the district voted to proceed with the construction of a stone schoolhouse at a cost of \$3000 on the old site facing the Court House. The two-story building stood ready the next year, but its four rooms, though the most spacious in the city, soon proved inadequate. The council, however, rejected the district's request in 1838 for a \$2500 special assessment to build an addition in the rear for the use of the girls, granting instead an extra \$200 for maintenance.<sup>112</sup>

Though none of the other twelve districts formulated such ambitious plans, similar difficulties obstructed each attempted reform, thus giving rise to a determined campaign for a revision of the entire system. A Committee for Elevating the Standards of Common School Education, organized at a public meeting in September, 1836, delegated A. C. Pratt, local author of popular lyrics, to study the problem and agitate for improvements throughout the county.<sup>113</sup> Spurred to action, the supervisors created a County Board of School Visitors, naming Dr. Whitehouse, rector of St. Luke's, as chairman and Henry O'Reilly as vice chairman.<sup>114</sup> Correspondence with educational reformers in the East and an exhaustive study of the local situation laid the groundwork for a succession of public meetings at the Court House late in 1838.<sup>115</sup> With Dr. Maltby Strong, a public spirited physician, presiding, Dr. White-

<sup>110</sup> Supervisors, *Proceedings: 1821-1849*, p. 202.

<sup>111</sup> Assembly Doc. (1835), No. 117.

<sup>112</sup> Gates District No. 2, Minute Book, May 11, 1835; May, 1838; May, 1840; MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>113</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Nov. 15, 1836; *Democrat*, Dec. 6, 1836; Jan. 4, 1837.

<sup>114</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 2289-2290.

<sup>115</sup> Jackson, *Free Schools*. The voluminous notations and bibliography which crowd the last hundred pages of this volume attest the ramifications of the movement for free schools throughout the Northeast. The struggle in Rochester, complex as it was, seems to have been much simpler in character than that depicted here for New York and New England.

house read the committee's report, recommending the creation of an independent board of education with power to appoint a superintendent, who in turn should be responsible for the selection of teachers and the general administration of all schools. The support of all common schools on a free basis by a city-wide tax and the purchase of a supply of school books recommended by the American Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge were likewise proposed.

There could be no doubt that the situation demanded drastic action. Of the 4064 children in the city between the ages of five and sixteen, the committee found only 1569 registered in the district schools. Another 1362 were cared for in the numerous select schools and those maintained by charity, yet more than one thousand attended no school whatever, and many of the enrollees attended irregularly, or for very short terms. The report likewise endorsed public aid for the advanced instruction of able but poor youths. While this last recommendation after a heated debate was voted down, the major portion of the report was enthusiastically adopted.<sup>116</sup>

As it required more than the approval of a citizens' meeting to put these reforms into effect, an enlarged committee, comprising three members from each ward, was created to urge the program upon the authorities. Additional men of ability—Ashbel W. Riley, James Seymour, Selah Mathews, and Frederick Starr among others—were thus drawn into the campaign. A series of letters signed "Y. Z." urged the reform in the press.<sup>117</sup> Although the economic hardships suffered by the community distracted attention in 1839, the agitation was continued by Drs. Whitehouse and Strong.<sup>118</sup> The school inspectors likewise recommended action,<sup>119</sup> and early in 1840 the campaign gained renewed vigor when the newly established *Workingman's Advocate* took up the cause.<sup>120</sup> A second report, prepared for the committee by George Arnold, a local banker, discovered a considerable waste of funds through the inefficiency of the district schools, while the County Board of Visitors, led now by James S. Wadsworth, recommended the appointment of a county school superintendent and the maintenance of free schools throughout that area.<sup>121</sup> Frequent sermons and public addresses rallied support. Opponents attacked the principle of taxing one man to educate the children of another, labelling it undemocratic, but arguments stressing the community's need for an informed electorate proved more persuasive.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>116</sup> *Rock. Republican*, Oct. 9, 1838; *Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 1838.

<sup>117</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 5, 6, 7, 11, 15, 27, 1838.

<sup>118</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 16, Nov. 7, 1839.

<sup>119</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 21, 1839; *Democrat*, Sept. 7, 1839.

<sup>120</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, Feb. 5, 13, 15, 1840.

<sup>121</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 1, 1841.

<sup>122</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 23, Feb. 8, Nov. 4, 1840; Jan. 12, Feb. 13, 16, Nov. 22, 1840; *Genesee Farmer*, VIII (1838), 40.

The close relation between ignorance and crime was emphasized by O'Reilly, who likewise urged that free schools, in view of their success in Providence and other Eastern communities,<sup>123</sup> could no longer be considered an untried experiment.

Finally in May, 1841, the legislature passed an amendment to the city charter providing for a board of education and a system of free, tax-supported, common schools. Despite the last-minute attempt of the city council to gain these powers for itself, an elective board was created with two members to be chosen from each ward. The board was to name the superintendent and to determine the funds needed, and as long as these remained within six times the sum provided by the state, the council was to levy the necessary tax. Any additional outlays would, however, require approval of the council, which thus retained an effective restraint over the program's expansion.<sup>124</sup>



Rochester, with one of the pioneer free school systems, was closely observed by educational reformers during the forties. The first board, including men active in the campaign, as Henry O'Reilly and Levi A. Ward, promptly chose the latter as president and selected Isaac Mack, a public spirited Whig and custom miller, as superintendent.<sup>125</sup> Two new districts were organized, the construction of several new school buildings was undertaken, and the enrollment more than doubled by 1842.<sup>126</sup> Within three years, nine new buildings were erected at a total cost of \$28,000, the registration at the fifteen schoolhouses amounted to 4,246, while forty-four teachers received an average of \$257.47 in 1844.<sup>127</sup> The program of studies included, in addition to the three R's, such subjects as algebra, history, geography, botany, grammar, geometry, book-keeping, and natural philosophy. Though an effort to equip school libraries developed, the purchase of school books was left to the parents.<sup>128</sup> Several unfortunate disciplinary cases attracted much attention, but the superintendent was more concerned over the irregularity of attendance, which he felt indicated the failure of parents to give full support to the experiment.<sup>129</sup>

Despite their many flaws, the public schools of Rochester became useful community centers by the mid-forties. A class in vocal music, organized by a volunteer teacher, proved so well trained in 1846 that a public recital prompted the board to appropriate \$25 for this instruc-

<sup>123</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 2290; *Democrat*, Dec. 30, 1840.

<sup>124</sup> *Democrat*, June 11, 1841.

<sup>125</sup> *Advertiser*, July 9, 1841.

<sup>126</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 11, June 21, 1842.

<sup>127</sup> *Democrat*, June 30, 1843; Feb. 12, 1844; *Advertiser*, Apr. 12, 1844; Board of Education, *2nd Annual Report* (1844), appendix.

<sup>128</sup> Bd. of Ed., *2nd Annual Report*, pp. 10-12, 32.

<sup>129</sup> Bd. of Ed., *2nd Annual Report*, pp. 15-17; *Advertiser*, June 7, 1844.

tion, and soon two music teachers were engaged part-time.<sup>130</sup> Occasional evening classes accommodated young mechanics whose circumstances did not permit their attendance at the regular hours, but these facilities never satisfied the needs of this group, estimated to number sixteen hundred in 1841.<sup>131</sup> The schoolhouses supplied convenient meeting places for newly organized religious societies, while the small library maintained in each building was made available for community use on Saturday mornings, when each principal was required to serve as librarian.<sup>132</sup>

The proper maintenance of these various structures demanded constant attention. Wood for the school stoves, previously received from the parents, had to be purchased and cut at the order of the board, though the teachers remained responsible for making their fires and keeping the buildings properly swept and ventilated. While occasional outlays for a new bell or for repairs of the white-washed school fences or the teachers' rostrums were required, the superintendent stoutly denied frequent charges that these expenditures represented an attempt to maintain palatial structures.<sup>133</sup>

Unfortunately the demand for economy, which obstructed so many civic functions during the late forties, inevitably retarded the educational advance. After the defeat in 1844 of Superintendent Mack's recommendation that a high school be established for the "talented and ambitious youth of our city," long delays ensued before his successors were able, near the mid-century, to organize creditable senior departments in a few of the larger schools.<sup>134</sup> The board, answering the frequent demands for economy with a denial that it had any plans for instruction in "the abstract sciences" or "the dead languages," affirmed its belief that a "knowledge of the simpler elements of the various common sciences" would redound to "the great and permanent good of the entire commonwealth."<sup>135</sup>

Spurred by repeated attacks on the free school system during the late forties, the board considered several proposed economies, such as the abandonment of separate classes for girls and the separate school for Negroes. In each case, however, the social problems involved aroused so much discussion that action was delayed.<sup>136</sup> Instead, salaries were reduced and other minor economies effected in a desperate effort to keep the expanding school program within the limits of the less generous

<sup>130</sup> Bd. of Ed., *Proceedings*, Aug. 2, 1847.

<sup>131</sup> Bd. of Ed., *Proceedings*, Dec. 3, 1849; *Democrat*, June 21, 1841.

<sup>132</sup> A. Laura McGregor, "The Early History of the Rochester Public Schools," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 51-52; *Democrat*, Mar. 5, 1846.

<sup>133</sup> McGregor, "Rochester Public Schools," 52-55.

<sup>134</sup> Bd. of Ed., *Proc.*, Feb. 2, Dec. 7, 1846; Aug. 28, 1848.

<sup>135</sup> Bd. of Ed., *Proc.*, Sept. 7, 1846.

<sup>136</sup> Bd. of Ed., *Proc.*, Aug. 6, 1849; Jan. 14, 1850; *Democrat*, Aug. 10, Sept. 7, Nov. 10, 16, 20, 1849.

appropriations of the late forties. Superintendent Belden R. McAlpine was able in 1847 to make the ironic boast that, among the eleven principal free-school cities, Rochester ranked fourth in the percentage of children attending, first in the average number of pupils per teacher, and last both in the average salaries and in the average cost per pupil.<sup>137</sup> Because of the continued growth of the city, the number of school buildings had to be increased to eighteen by 1849, enrolling 5,655 pupils for varied terms under the charge of fifty-two teachers. The funds available that year totalled \$16,620.30, or barely three dollars per pupil.<sup>138</sup> These figures represented an advance, however, over the extreme economy of the previous four years, resulting in part, no doubt, from the earnest agitation of the Monroe County Teachers' Association under the leadership of Dr. Chester Dewey.<sup>139</sup> With the success in 1849 of the campaign for free schools throughout the state, Rochester's pioneer efforts in this field received legislative endorsement.



One persuasive argument against a tax-supported high school was the group of private academies which vied with each other for the community's favor during the forties.<sup>140</sup> Several of them, dating from the thirties, had enjoyed a promising growth before the city school system was successfully organized. Although private in character, they enlisted the energies and loyalties of citizen sponsors, and fond traditions strengthened their hold upon the community.

The most important of these academies was indeed almost a public institution in spirit and activity. The Rochester Seminary, successor to the ill-fated High School of 1827, though operated as an incorporated academy under the control of a board of trustees, continued during the thirties to provide primary instruction to the children of the two districts which had erected the building. Evidence of the growing interest of the community in practical and scientific subjects appeared in 1836 when the classical-minded Reverend Gilbert Morgan, called to the presidency of the Western University of Pennsylvania,<sup>141</sup> was replaced as principal by Dr. Chester Dewey, a graduate of and for a time professor at Williams College and one of the country's half-dozen pioneers in physical and natural sciences.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Bd. of Ed., *6th Annual Report* (1847), pp. 9-10.

<sup>138</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 9, 1850.

<sup>139</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 17, 1846; Feb. 23, 1848; Gilbert, "Government and Finances," Tables II, III, part 3, IV, part 1.

<sup>140</sup> *Advertiser*, June 4, 13, 14, 16, 1845. It is interesting to note that Dr. Dewey and several others interested in the academies as teachers or trustees favored a public high school, while most of the opposition came from the economy-minded political leaders.

<sup>141</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 1, 1835.

<sup>142</sup> Ethel McAllister, *Amos Eaton: Scientist and Educator* (Philadelphia, 1941), pp. 173-174, *passim*.

When the Seminary reorganized as the Rochester Collegiate Institute in 1839, its ties with the school districts were completely severed,<sup>143</sup> though a small juvenile department continued until 1842. With the additional space thus made available for laboratories, it was early discovered that the chemistry experiments should be held during the last period of the day, lest escaping odors or occasional accidents disturb the other classes. Geological and botanical specimens, in which Dr. Dewey took particular delight, were gathered in abundance from the gorge and the nearby swamps, while the work of the biology class was greatly facilitated in 1848 when a specially prepared eyeglass arrived for the school's double microscope.

Dr. Dewey believed that learning could best be acquired through analysis and demonstration, rather than by dull memory work.<sup>144</sup> One observer noted with interest that the youthful orators at the public examinations chose to deliver quotations from Adams, Clay, Webster, and other contemporary figures, in place of Demosthenes, Cicero, or Burke, popular in his own youth.<sup>145</sup> Not only the academic scholars, averaging around 150 boys annually and paying from twenty to twenty-five dollars in tuition, but the entire community as well profited from the educational leadership of Dr. Dewey and the Collegiate Institute.<sup>146</sup>

The Institute met increasing competition in one field, as several female seminaries gained a foothold in the city, and in 1841 the girls' department was abandoned. The first female seminary had been started nearly a decade before by the Black sisters and Sarah Seward, three graduates of Emma Willard's seminary in Troy. The latter soon took charge, moving the school in 1835 into a fine new building on Alexander Street.<sup>147</sup> The choice residential quarter in the Third Ward, disturbed over the removal of the seminary, gave an eager welcome to Julia Jones and the Doolittle sisters, rallying to form a stock company which suc-

<sup>143</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 25, May 1, 1839.

<sup>144</sup> N. Y. Regents, *Reports* (1848), pp. 168-169; (1849), pp. 164-167.

<sup>145</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 22, 1845.

<sup>146</sup> Blake McKelvey, "On the Educational Frontier," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 27-28; Charles W. Seelye, "A Memorial Sketch of Chester Dewey," Rochester Academy of Science, III, 182-184; *Dictionary of American Biography*, V, 267-268; Martin B. Anderson, *Sketch of the Life of Chester Dewey* (Albany, 1868). Dewey's influence is happily revealed in a letter from Elisabeth Selden Spencer to Captain Amos Eaton, Rochester, Dec. 8, 1837: "Prof. Dewey has commenced a course of private Lectures on Geology, to a class of about twenty or more ladies, married & unmarried, who meet every Saturday afternoon at Mrs Kempshall's house, Aunt Susan, Eliza, & myself attend them, they are only just commenced. . . . we intend to open your box of minerals and examine them." Elisabeth Selden Spencer Eaton Letters.

<sup>147</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 11, 1832; Feb. 20, Mar. 19, 1833; *Democrat*, Mar. 27, 1834; Oct. 23, 1835.

cessfully opened the Rochester Female Academy on Fitzhugh Street in May, 1836.<sup>148</sup> Still a third seminary was established during 1839 in Dr. Levi Ward's old home on St. Paul Street by Mary B. Allen, formerly head of the girls' department in the High School.<sup>149</sup>

A friendly rivalry developed between these three schools, each catering to girls between twelve and sixteen years of age but occasionally admitting younger children. Miss Seward accommodated a few out-of-town girls, charging \$140 a year for board, room, and tuition. Regular day pupils paid \$8 or \$10 each quarter, with extra charges for training in such leisure arts as music and painting.

The program of studies varied to suit the convenience of the teachers and their pupils, who averaged around a hundred at each school. The class records kept by the Female Academy reveal that in 1839 twelve-year-old Mary Buell studied Blake's *Natural Philosophy* for three months, the first two volumes of Pierce's *Universal History* for six months, *Watts on the Mind* for nine months, as well as six months of French. The next year Mary continued her French, devoted three months to Smith's *Arithmetic*, and six each to Smellies' *Philosophy*, Burritt's *Astronomy*, Newman's *Rhetoric*, and the last two volumes of Pierce's *History*. The third year was devoted to Davis' *Algebra*, Smith's *Physics*, Lincoln's *Botany*, Robbins' *Universal History*, and some more French. Some of Mary's schoolmates read Wayland's *Moral Philosophy*, Paley's *Theology*, Kane's *Elementary Christianity*, Alexander's *Evidences of Christianity*, Goodrich's *United States History*, among other books. The work was carried on by individual rather than class assignments, and apparently the subjects depended in part on the texts available.<sup>150</sup>

The spell cast over each school by its mistress usually proved the dominating influence. Thus the diminutive Araminta Doolittle, noted for her charming poise, endowed her girls with a polished dignity and self-restraint that assured them absolute command in the drawing room.<sup>151</sup> Miss Seward's and Miss Allen's girls proved equally recognizable, as the former's cheerful disposition indulged a "rather wild set," while the forthright piety of the latter, as interpreted by the girls of the Seminary on Allen Street, where it located in 1844, played as significant a part in the emerging urban society as the decorum of the Third Ward girls.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>148</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Feb. 13, 1838; Jane H. Nichols, *Rochester Female Academy: An Historical Sketch: 1837-1912* (Rochester, n.d.), pp. 6-12.

<sup>149</sup> Mary B. Allen King, *Looking Backward*, pp. 168-188.

<sup>150</sup> Rochester Female Academy, Class Books, 1837-1842, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>151</sup> Alice L. Hopkins, *A Reminiscence of Miss A. D. Doolittle and the Rochester Female Academy* (Rochester, n.d.), p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> E. S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Dec. 29, 1837; Sarah C. Eaton to E. S. S. Eaton, Troy, Sept. 13, 1838; E. S. S. Eaton Letters; *Roch. Republican*,

The younger sisters of these seminary girls were accommodated in the late thirties by "no less than a dozen (perhaps there are more) select schools," as one observer noted, adding that "an educated young woman needs only a suitable room and some apparatus, and then begins operation at once."<sup>153</sup> Their tuition ranged between three and six dollars each quarter, slightly above the charges at the district schools before 1841, yet the feeling that a respectable miss would not receive proper treatment in the common schools assured many of the select schools annual enrollments of a dozen or so girls. A few advertised as "infant schools," revealing the influence of Robert Owen's New Lanark experiment.<sup>154</sup> The Young Ladies Benevolent Society of St. Luke's established a charity school for infants in 1833, while the school of the Female Charitable Society gave increased attention to younger children.<sup>155</sup>

Other church schools of the period foreshadowed a new parochial trend. Three years after St. Joseph's Catholic Church provided a school for its German children in 1836, the Irish at St. Patrick's followed suit, while the German Lutheran and the second German Catholic churches provided schools soon after their establishment. Supported for the most part by the parishes benefitted, these schools compared with the charity schools at St. Luke's and of the Charitable Society—except in the basic language and the brand of religion dispensed. Though the arrival of the Sisters of Charity at the Catholic Orphan Asylum in 1845 marked a new beginning in Catholic education, the attempt to establish a College of the Sacred Heart at Rochester in 1848 met failure, and no further parochial developments occurred before the mid-century.<sup>156</sup>

Meanwhile, the free school program of 1841 considerably reduced the field of activity for charity and select schools alike. Not only did the improved common schools with enlarged enrollments find it possible to classify their pupils into departments, but in many cases they separated the boys from the girls. Some of the earlier teachers of select schools were attracted into the public schools, as was Emily Hotchkiss, by the good salaries of the early forties. However, as Superintendent Mack complained, "many [parents continued to] withdraw their children from the public schools with the belief that their morals are better

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Nov. 19, 1839; King, *Looking Backward*; G. B. F. Hallock and Maude Motley, *A Living Church: The First Hundred Years of Brick Church*, p. 181.

<sup>153</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Nov. 19, 1839.

<sup>154</sup> *Observer*, May 14, 1830; *Democrat*, Apr. 22, 28, 1834.

<sup>155</sup> Henry Anstice, *Annals of St. Luke's Church*, p. 34; R. H. S., *Pub.*, IX, 68-69.

<sup>156</sup> Rev. Frederick Zwierlein, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 200-211; Aaron Abell, "Elementary and Secondary Catholic Education in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVI, 133-137.



protected in private schools" or for "aristocratical distinctions."<sup>157</sup> By 1845 the thirty-three private schools and seminaries of 1840 were reduced to sixteen, while their 1226 pupils had dwindled to 622, most of the latter attending the higher schools. Yet reductions in the salaries of public teachers prompted several, among them Miss Hotchkiss, to reopen select schools, and a small number continued into the fifties.<sup>158</sup>

Private and incorporated academies reached the height of their popularity and influence in the Rochester area during the forties. Several select and grammar schools, discouraged by public school competition, added more advanced subjects in an endeavor to hold their pupils for longer periods. Mrs. Elizabeth Atkinson, widow of the pioneer miller, converted her select school into the Atkinson Female Seminary in 1841, continuing in a modest fashion until her marriage in 1848 to the noted revivalist, Charles G. Finney.<sup>159</sup> Mr. Miles's grammar school on Ann Street added a few sciences and equipped itself with the first gymnastic fixtures advertised in the city, thus prolonging its life for several years.<sup>160</sup>

Rochester young folk found increasing opportunities for academic instruction in neighboring institutions. A half-dozen academies struggled along for varied periods in the smaller villages of Monroe County, the most successful being the reorganized Monroe Academy in Henrietta, the Brockport Collegiate Institute, which rivaled that of Rochester, and the Clover Street Seminary. The last of these, established in Brighton by Celestia A. Bloss, a former teacher in Rochester and author of *Bloss' Ancient History*, proved especially popular among those eager to return for weekends at home by stage or canal boat.<sup>161</sup> New academies in LeRoy, East Bloomfield, and Lima vied with the older institutions in Canandaigua, Geneva, and Utica for the patronage of other Rochester young folk.<sup>162</sup>

The state census of 1845 gave Monroe County a high rating in school attendance. There were then 432 scholars in the academies of the county, as compared with 1,422 in private and select schools, and 14,849 in the common district schools. Only 30 from the entire county were enrolled in college; yet they almost equalled the number of graduates resident in Rochester. Seven other counties in the state reported more children of school age, and nine had more sons in college, but only

<sup>157</sup> Bd. of Ed., *2nd Annual Report* (1844), p. 26.

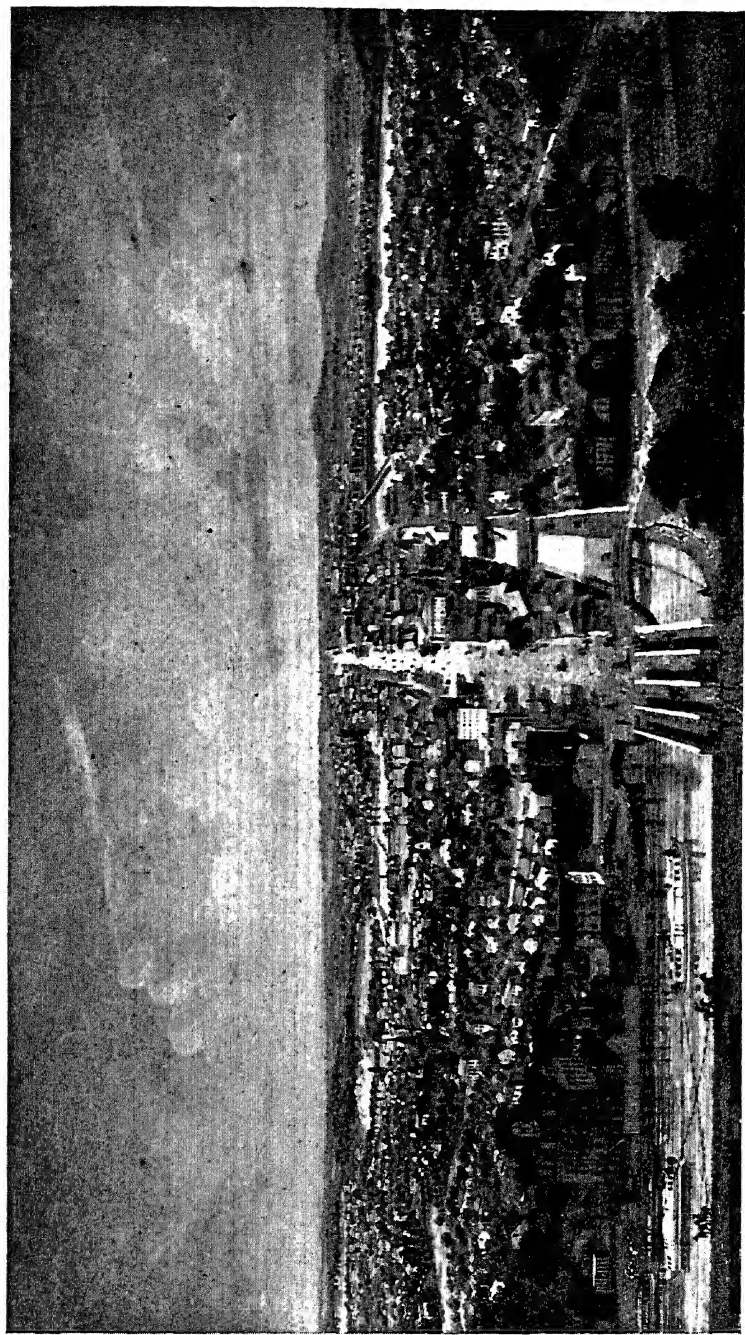
<sup>158</sup> Bd. of Ed., *Ann. Report* (1845), pp. 10-12; (1847), pp. 9-10.

<sup>159</sup> *Democrat*, June 10, 1841; Apr. 7, 1842; Nov. 21, 1848.

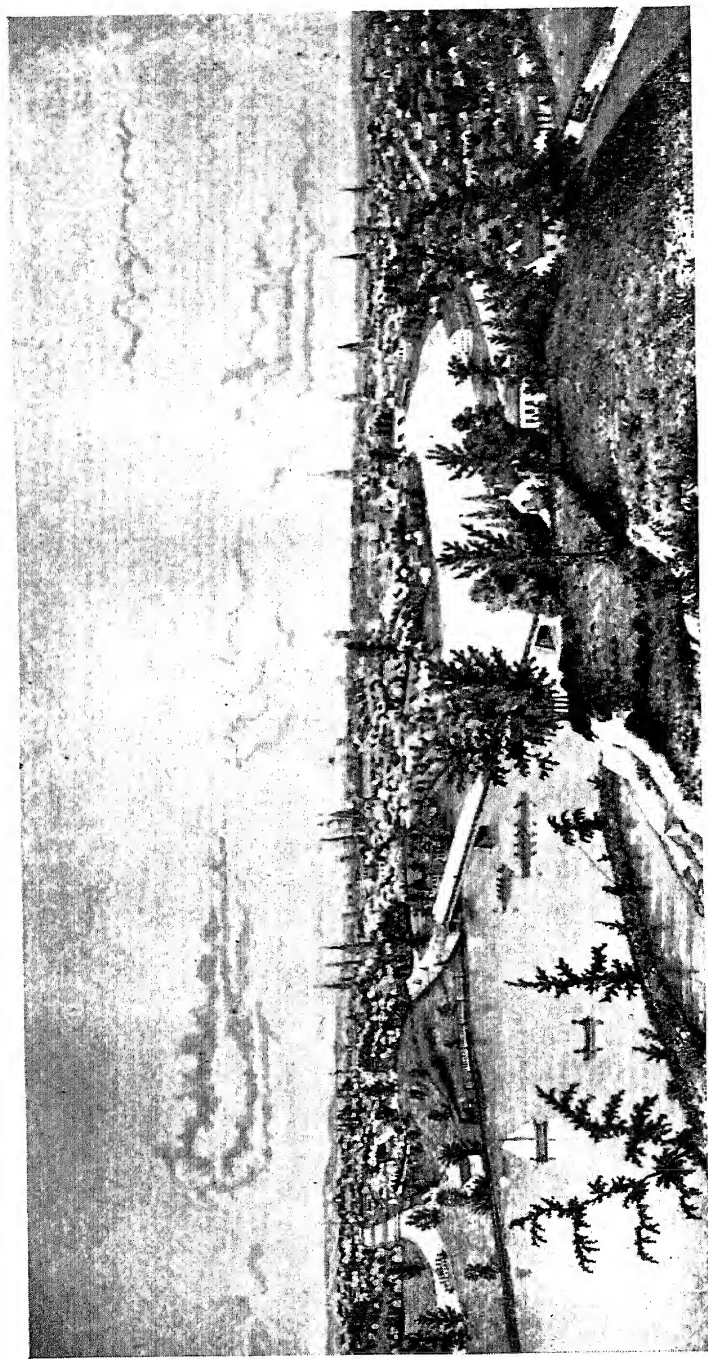
<sup>160</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 29, 1848.

<sup>161</sup> Joseph B. Bloss, "A Full History of the School," *Rochester Post-Express*, Feb. 10, 1894.

<sup>162</sup> McKelvey, "Educational Frontier," pp. 28-31; Clarissa Reynolds' letters to her parents from Miss Sheldon's school in Utica, 1841-42, Autograph Letter Collection, Roch. Hist. Soc.



XIV. ROCHESTER FROM THE WEST, 1853



XV. VIEW OF ROCHESTER FROM MT. HOPE, 1854

five exceeded Monroe either in the number of academy scholars or in common school enrollment.<sup>163</sup>

Another class of private schools offered varied opportunities for adults. "Writing professors" frequently advertised a course of fifteen evening lessons guaranteed to provide ladies and gentlemen with an elegant handwriting or a knowledge of bookkeeping.<sup>164</sup> Music and dancing lessons were likewise available from time to time. Mr. P. Thomas made more than one visit, engaging rooms in the Mansion House, where the ball room remained popular until the destruction of the favorite old tavern by fire. "It matters not," he advised the public, "how well a person can dance a cotillion or contra dance, still they cannot join in the waltz, nor yet in the more graceful *Spanish dances*."<sup>165</sup> More prosaic was the projected Mount Hope Agricultural and Horticultural School, but the abortive attempt to found an agricultural college at Wheatland in 1846 ended with an equally unsuccessful effort to reestablish it near the Ellwanger and Barry nurseries in Rochester.<sup>166</sup> Meanwhile, despite several attempts to found a full-fledged college, the mid-century rolled around ere the dream was realized.<sup>167</sup>



Fortunately the intellectual needs of adult citizens received the attention of varied societies. The functions of collecting a library, maintaining a reading room, arranging lecture courses, and providing facilities for discussion and debate were sufficiently public in character to insure that whenever one society faltered another appeared to carry on. Thus, when both the Athenaeum and the Young Men's Society of the early thirties declined, a new organization, known as the Mechanics' Association, was formed by sixteen young men in February, 1836. With young William A. Reynolds as president, more than one hundred members soon enrolled, and a library of around fifteen hundred books slowly accumulated. For more than a decade the association, despite frequent changes in location, afforded its members an opportunity for reading and discussion.<sup>168</sup>

The voluminous output of numerous printers and the enterprise of

<sup>163</sup> N. Y. State *Census* (1845), recapitulation, 1 and 2. The number of known college men resident in Rochester did not exceed two score at any one time during the forties, but the evidence is too scattered to be conclusive. See F. DeW. Ward, *Churches of Rochester* (Rochester, 1871), for the educational background of the successive ministers.

<sup>164</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 14, 1838; Nov. 19, Dec. 4, 1840.

<sup>165</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 27, 1832; Dec. 11, 1833; Oct. 6, 1846; *Democrat*, Sept. 25, 1839; Feb. 17, 1847.

<sup>166</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, VII (1846), 7; VIII (1847), 10.

<sup>167</sup> See below, pp. 293-295.

<sup>168</sup> *The Charter, Constitution and By-Laws of the Mechanics' Literary Association of the City of Rochester* (Rochester, 1843); Blake McKelvey, "Early Library Developments in and around Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVI, 32-33.

several bookstores supplied further range for literary tastes. Private libraries were increasing in size, though perhaps few rivaled that gathered by the much-travelled Dr. Anson Colman, which included 426 books at the time of his death in 1837. Yet the number able to enjoy such facilities was limited. The want of an institution that would offer "intellectual and moral attractions to counteract the vicious allurements to which the young men of this city are largely exposed" was emphasized by the startling report of the community's first murder. Under the vigorous leadership of Henry O'Reilly a new organization was formed in 1837, known as the Young Men's Association, and two thousand books were collected for a reading room, ambitiously designated the City Library.<sup>169</sup>

It proved an appropriate moment for such a development, since the lyceum movement was just then spreading into the West.<sup>170</sup> The American tour of the Honorable James S. Buckingham in 1838 played a minor part in the development, for despite that traveler's moderate talents as a public speaker, his efforts to defray the cost of his tour by lectures on Egypt and Palestine revealed the latent demand.<sup>171</sup> After assisting Buckingham with his appointments in western New York, O'Reilly found himself acting as talent agent for neighboring young men's societies and occasionally invited speakers to Rochester from Buffalo or New England. One of the most popular of these, the "Learned Blacksmith," Elihu Burritt, made repeated visits.<sup>172</sup>

Under the enthusiastic leadership of Henry O'Reilly, the Association became a focal center of the community. The moribund Athenaeum soon determined to merge with the new society and elected the latter's officers to its board. Reorganization was quickly effected under the name Athenaeum and Young Men's Association, with O'Reilly as president, while a membership campaign enrolled more than 500 dues-paying members and enlarged the book collection to nearly 4000.<sup>173</sup> Busts of Franklin, Clinton, Washington, Napoleon, Cicero, Demosthenes, and Homer added dignity to the reading room.<sup>174</sup> With ambitious plans for

<sup>169</sup> *A Brief Report of the Rise, Progress and Condition of the Rochester Athenaeum and Young Men's Association* (Rochester, 1840), p. 5; Mrs. Alice T. Sutton, who has searched the inventories of twenty-five Rochesterians mentioned frequently in these pages, finds thirteen which recorded libraries, numbering from 108 to "about 600" and averaging 235. These were of course exceptional or selected cases.

<sup>170</sup> Weld, *Brooklyn Village*, pp. 233-245.

<sup>171</sup> Letters to and from J. S. Buckingham in 1838 and 1840, O'Reilly Doc., Nos. 954, 1640. See also J. S. Buckingham, *America, Historical, Statistic, and Descriptive* (London, 1841), III, 46-97.

<sup>172</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 15, 1839; Mar. 16, 1841; Letters to and from Elihu Burritt, 1838-1843, O'Reilly Doc., Nos. 1486, 1637-1639.

<sup>173</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 2174; *Democrat*, Feb. 22, Aug. 5, 1839.

<sup>174</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 2174.

the erection of an Athenaeum and library building, O'Reilly took an option on a centrally located property, but the darkening shadows of the depression discouraged further action, and the project was abandoned.<sup>175</sup>

The Association's major problem was that of enlisting adequate leadership. Though resigning as president in 1840, O'Reilly continued to devote much attention to the affairs of the Association until his removal to Albany in 1842. For a time Dr. Chester Dewey carried the burden of arranging the lecture programs and supervising the care of the library, but mounting difficulties closed the reading room for a full year in 1845. After a sale of some books enabled the officers to free the library from debt, new rooms were opened over the Museum on Exchange Street in 1847. An active lecture program that year revived plans for consolidation with the Mechanics' Association, which had continued in a modest fashion as a library and debating society throughout the decade.<sup>176</sup>

Unexpected advantages resulted from the union of the two societies under the name Athenaeum and Mechanics' Association. William A. Reynolds, long the most active leader of the smaller group, saw an opportunity to benefit the community and at the same time develop his property back of the Arcade by erecting a spacious lecture hall in what was practically the city's population center. When Corinthian Hall, built at a cost of \$12,000, opened in the summer of 1849, the Association could look ahead to a period of prosperity during which the proceeds from popularly attended lectures would maintain a serviceable library. The book collections of the parent organizations were joined and moved into new rooms in the Reynolds Arcade, providing a library not unworthy of comparison with those of other small cities of the day.<sup>177</sup> But it was in the facilities afforded by Corinthian Hall that adult Rochesterians saw an opportunity to enjoy the edification supplied by the increasing number of traveling lyceum lecturers at the mid-century. The arrival of Richard Henry Dana in 1849 proved a good omen for the future.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>175</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 2218.

<sup>176</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 3, 1840; Feb. 20, 1841; Apr. 24, 1845; Jan. 12, 19, 28, Apr. 20, 1847; *Advertiser*, May 16, 1841; Apr. 22, 1844; May 5, July 9, 1847.

<sup>177</sup> McKelvey, "Early Library Developments," pp. 39-42; *Advertiser*, June 26, 28, 1849; July 1, 1850; Wm. A. Reynolds, "Works Street Building Account Book" (1848-1861), MS, R. P. L.

<sup>178</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 4, 1849; *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 23, 1849.

## CHAPTER X

### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION

1834-1850

**D**ESPITE the turbulent economic environment and the urgent civic problems of Rochester's first urban decades, her citizens enjoyed increased opportunities for social expression. In many respects developments here proved more gratifying than in either the civic or economic fields. Indeed, by the mid-century the city was to achieve a fair degree of cultural fullness and self-sufficiency.

Religion still supplied the chief cultural dynamic, and while much energy was consumed in institutional organization, sufficient remained to give force to numerous humanitarian movements. The latter were called forth, at least in part, by the new urban environment, in which varied social traditions and new group aspirations contended for dominance. The rivalry found vent in political, journalistic, and institutional struggles and occasionally in disorderly outbursts. Among the host of newcomers, many with professional training arrived to fill the places left vacant by some of the earlier settlers, enabling Rochester to share in the cultural florescence of the East. But if many older settlers moved on, others remained, and the late forties saw them basking for the first time in reminiscences of the city they had helped to build.

#### RELIGIOUS AND HUMANITARIAN TRENDS

The vibrant religious activity of the early thirties continued to animate the life of Rochester. Repeated revivals joined with old and new doctrinal disputes and with fresh cleavages over social problems to raise up new churches, new sects, and new humanitarian movements. At the same time several of the older institutions, enjoying increased stability, developed a tendency toward conservatism. A new link was forged between the religious and educational functions in the city when the Baptists finally succeeded in establishing both a college and a theological seminary at the close of the period.

The fifteen churches of the mid-thirties represented the major group-activity (excepting the family) in the newly-established city. Not only did the regular Sabbath morning and evening sermons generally fill

an hour or so each, but Sunday afternoon sermons were not unusual, though adult Bible classes provided substitutes in a few cases.<sup>1</sup> The numerous Sabbath schools enrolled 2200 pupils in 1839, and 2875 in 1848 when 300 teachers rendered volunteer service.<sup>2</sup> Regular mid-week prayer meetings and, at least in the case of the Methodists, testimonial class meetings proved customary, while special religious organizations consumed additional time. The Reverend George Beecher, third son of Lyman Beecher and a recent arrival from Lane Seminary, complained in 1838 that the number of church cares obstructed his efforts to "maintain a clear and abiding view of Heaven." Nevertheless, regretting to see family worship neglected, Beecher spurred himself to perform a weekly stint of twenty pastoral calls and to maintain two weekday classes for the religious instruction of eighty children. Fortunately, he enjoyed the coöperation of several pious elders and found time to gather with other Protestant pastors every Monday morning for fellowship and prayer.<sup>3</sup>

The evangelical spirit which had swept the community in the early thirties, routing old Calvinists and deists alike, had failed to achieve lasting dominance. Perhaps economic recovery, by supplying a more tangible justification for optimistic individualism, relaxed the need for humanitarian sublimation and spiritual stays. At any event, resurgent doctrinal disputes disturbed the harmony achieved among the leading Protestant churches during Finney's revival. The Presbyterians, the most numerous sect in Rochester, were particularly distraught. The two younger of their four societies, Third and Free Church, suffered from internal strife. Still another, Bethel Free Congregation, led out from First Presbyterian by Elder John F. Bush in 1836, nourished a small company who enjoyed freedom of discussion with respect to the moral and political issues of the day.<sup>4</sup>

The local situation reflected the growing division among Presbyterians throughout the nation. Divergence of opinion over the slave question, rivalry between Lane Seminary and Oberlin College, differences of temperament between Eastern and Southern orthodox Calvinists on the one hand and such men as Finney, Weld, and Gerrit Smith on the other—

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Schermerhorn to his wife, Rochester, July, 1838, Schermerhorn Letters, courtesy of Mrs. Rudolph Stanley-Brown, Washington, D. C., photostat copies in Roch. Pub. Library; *The Christian Mirror* (Rochester, 1847), I: 9-10, 26-27.

<sup>2</sup> *Rochester Daily Democrat*, July 11, 1839; *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Nov. 14, 1848.

<sup>3</sup> *Biographical Remains of the Reverend George Beecher* (New York, 1844), pp. 53-76.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Orlo J. Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism in Rochester," R. H. S., Pub., XII, 281; J. M. Maurer, "The Central Presbyterian Church," *Rochester Post-Express*, May 4, 1894; *A Century with Central Presbyterian Church* (Rochester, 1936), pp. 1-6.



all were more or less directly involved.<sup>5</sup> In this larger struggle for control of the church, the conservative Old School element prompted the General Assembly to adopt the Exscinding Act of 1837 which practically read out of the fold the strongly evangelical synods of western New York and northern Ohio.<sup>6</sup>

Efforts to heal the breach, though unsuccessful, put a check to the more radical trends in Rochester. George Beecher, a delegate to the General Assembly at Philadelphia in 1839, prayed devoutly that the slavery question and other differences among the brethren might be overcome.<sup>7</sup> When the Old School Assembly refused to readmit their erstwhile rivals, a separate New School Assembly was formed by the exscinded churches, but the Rochester pastors held aloof from both assemblies for several years.<sup>8</sup> Staunch advocates of orthodoxy emerged, such as Tryon Edwards of First Church and Albert G. Hall who in 1840 was called to Third Church, already well established in its second stone building and adhering to conservative Calvinist traditions.<sup>9</sup> Beecher felt inclined after his return from Philadelphia to expound the doctrine of "entire sanctification" but stoutly denied that he had swung over to the Oberlin camp.<sup>10</sup> When, at his father's suggestion, Beecher resigned his charge at Brick Church, the warm spirit of his successor, James B. Shaw, was held in check by Edwards and Hall. A Fifth Presbyterian Church, established in the interim by the moderate school, became Fourth Church when the radical Free Church dissolved. Yet Mrs. Atkinson, the school teacher widow of an early miller, who "embraced Mr. Finney's views of Sanctification" (and later the revivalist himself as his second wife), persuaded many of her friends to read and ponder the doctrines of the *Oberlin Evangelist*. Other free spirits, finding themselves in the minority at Bethel, withdrew in 1841 to found the First Congregational Church, with strong antislavery and other Oberlin sentiments.<sup>11</sup>

Revivals had been recurrent in the area throughout these years, and when Charles G. Finney visited Rochester briefly in 1840, 1841, and

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse: 1830-1844* (New York, 1933), pp. 162-163, and *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. James M. Hotchkiss, *A History of Western New York and of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Presbyterian Church* (New York, 1848), pp. 222-240.

<sup>7</sup> *Biographical Remains of the Reverend George Beecher*, pp. 79ff.

<sup>8</sup> Hotchkiss, *History of Western New York*, pp. 241-252; *History of the Rochester Presidency* (Rochester, 1889), pp. 31, 43-56; *Democrat*, May 25, Aug. 9, 1839.

<sup>9</sup> "Tryon Edwards," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, XIV, 155; Third Presbyterian Church, "Annals from Record Books," MS in Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>10</sup> *Biographical Remains of the Reverend George Beecher*, pp. 79ff.

<sup>11</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Feb. 8, 17, 1840, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," pp. 282-283.

1842 the forces of evangelicalism regained ascendancy. The aloof stand of Edwards and Hall could not stop the "refreshing shower" brought to Bethel by Finney and to Brick Church by Jedediah Burchard.<sup>12</sup> The Methodists and Baptists eagerly opened their doors. Possibly the remarkable results, notably those of Finney among lawyers and businessmen, resulted in part from renewed hardships in the economic sphere. Thus Abelard Reynolds, having recently washed his hands of unfortunate land speculations, assured his daughter that he was "struggling to expiate my former delinquencies" in spiritual matters.<sup>13</sup>

Fervid revivals continued to uplift the city during the mid-forties. Levi A. Ward rejoiced in March, 1843, to find "protracted meetings" in progress in twelve city churches, while the pious realtor, J. M. Schermerhorn, wrote his wife that several of the churches are "very much filled up" though "Christians are considerably exhausted from the long protracted efforts, being 7 or 8 weeks." Brick Church had to "resort to the Galleries for seats to supply all the applicants" at the annual rental that spring, for "never did pews find so ready and rapid a market."<sup>14</sup>

Warm revivals and fresh accessions to the population were chiefly responsible for the organization of several other new churches. Indeed, most of the established denominations enjoyed an active growth, possible exceptions being Bethel Church, which continued primarily as a Sabbath school, and St. Paul's, the east-side Episcopal parish. Misfortune dogged the latter's path, with doctrinal disputes, a scandal involving one of the pastors, two destructive fires, and perennial financial difficulties closely following one another. St. Luke's was more fortunate, as the friction of Antimasonic days disappeared during the ministry of Dr. Henry J. Whitehouse, and healthy growth prompted the first steps in 1845 to organize Trinity Church, the third Episcopal society in the city.<sup>15</sup>

The First Baptist Church, stimulated by the refreshing revivals of Elder Jacob Knapp in the late thirties, was led with increasing skill and devotion by Deacons Oren Sage and Alvah Strong and by the Reverend Pharcellus Church, whose efforts to harmonize the free and orthodox wings of his flock proved eminently successful. Second Baptist, organized in 1834 for the east-siders, took over the spacious home of Third Presbyterian, becoming the first church in Rochester to admit Negroes to

<sup>12</sup> E. S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Jan. 25, 31, Feb. 15, 1842, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Schermerhorn Letters, July 21, 31, 1841; Edwin Scrantom's Diary, Mar. 4, 21, 1842, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>13</sup> Abelard Reynolds to Clarissa Reynolds, Rochester, Mar. 15, 1842, and Reynolds Letters in Roch. Hist. Soc., *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Schermerhorn Letters, Mar. 14, 29, 1843.

<sup>15</sup> Rev. Henry Anstice, *Centennial Annals of St. Luke's Church*, pp. 26-36; Rev. Louis C. Washburn, *Historical Sketch of the Episcopal Church in the City of Rochester, N. Y.* (Rochester, 1908).

the main body of pews.<sup>16</sup> When the large Methodist church on Buffalo Street was destroyed by fire in 1835, the officials promptly voted to rebuild. Soon the largest auditorium in the city, able to seat two thousand and said to be the largest Methodist chapel in the country, opened for use, and a rapid succession of pastors struggled under the burdens of a numerous congregation and a heavy debt.<sup>17</sup> An African Methodist Church, organized in 1834, proved more enduring than its predecessor of 1828,<sup>18</sup> while an East Society of the Methodist Church, first established in 1836, reorganized as St. John's Church in 1842, the same year that another Methodist society moved in from Cobb's Hill schoolhouse to become the Alexander Street Methodist Church. Meanwhile, a group of German Protestants, organized as the Zion Lutheran Society in the early thirties, erected a church and opened a parochial school in 1838.<sup>19</sup>

Apparently the most rapid growth was enjoyed by the Catholics who benefited directly from the swelling stream of German and Irish immigrants. Popular hostility subsided somewhat after the demise of the *Observer*, though much ill feeling developed when the Young Men's Society debated the influence of Catholicism in America.<sup>20</sup> So rapid was the expansion of St. Patrick's congregation that Bernard O'Reilly, the priest in charge, readily coöperated with the Redemptorist missionary, Father Joseph Prost, in the establishment in 1836 of a German Catholic Church, later known as St. Joseph's. With a membership of six hundred at the start, the new church survived the hard years after the departure of Father Prost in 1838 and, assisted by missionary funds from the Leopold Foundation in Europe, completed a new building on Franklin Street by 1846. A second German Catholic church, St. Peter's, had already been erected on the west side, and the three large Catholic parishes, each equipped with a stone church and parochial school, possibly ranked second only to the Presbyterians in numbers by the mid-forties.<sup>21</sup>

Doctrinal and personality difficulties disturbed many of these churches,

<sup>16</sup> *Centennial Celebration: First Baptist Church: 1818-1918* (Rochester, 1918), pp. 10-20; Charles M. Williams, *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Second Baptist Church* (Rochester, 1909); "Pharcellus Church," *Dictionary of American Biography*, IV, 104.

<sup>17</sup> Rev. M. Tooker, *Poems and Jottings of Itinerancy in Western New York* (Rochester, 1860), pp. 143-144; Elijah Hebard, "Autobiography," MS in Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>18</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 27, 1834.

<sup>19</sup> Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," pp. 278-279, 280, 283-284.

<sup>20</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 12, Feb. 18, 1835.

<sup>21</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 22, 1843; July 28, 1846; T. W. Mullaney, *Four Score Years: A History of Catholic Germans in Rochester* (Rochester, 1916), pp. 40-41; Rev. F. J. Zwierlein, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 197-203.

though not so seriously as in the case of the Presbyterian. A group of zealous opponents of slavery formed a new Wesleyan Methodist Society in 1843, just a year after several doctrinaire liberals seceded from Zion Lutheran to found Trinity Evangelical. A small band of Free-Will Baptists, who held occasional meetings during the late thirties, did not formally organize until 1845.<sup>22</sup> Both the Orthodox and the Hicksite Friends continued their separate societies, the former led by Silas Cornell and the latter by Isaac Post and Elihu F. Marshall among others.<sup>23</sup>

Two groups of religious dissenters reappeared in Rochester during the period. The Unitarians, renewing their efforts to establish a church, rejoiced in the late thirties over the arrival of Myron Holley, a fellow communicant whose long career in the Genesee Country had won him wide respect. But Holley's death in 1841 dealt a severe blow to the society, and although it successfully dedicated a building in 1843, public sentiment proved sufficiently hostile to exclude its pastor, the Reverend F. W. Holland, from the ceremonies in honor of Myron Holley.<sup>24</sup> Possibly the fact that most Rochester Yankees hailed from Connecticut and western Massachusetts, rather than from the Boston area, contributed to the feeble state of Unitarianism in the city. A succession of Universalist pastors, serving a small flock in Rochester as well as outlying charges, published the *Herald of Truth* in the late thirties, a struggling weekly which was renamed the *Western Luminary* in 1840. Lack of support prompted a removal of the paper to Buffalo in the mid-forties when the local pastors likewise moved away.<sup>25</sup>

Even less popular, if possible, was a small group of deists and free-thinkers. Some one hundred assembled at the City Hotel on January 29, 1835, to celebrate Paine's birthday, and the next year a local gathering heard the famous Boston "infidel," Abner Kneeland, stopping off on his route westward. When friction between this group and the Free-Will Baptists over use of the Court House prompted the supervisors to close the doors on Sundays, the Society of Free Enquirers continued their meetings for several years in a grocery. Two freethought weeklies, *The World as It Is*, launched by Dr. Luke Shepard in 1836, and the *New York Watchman*, brought to Rochester by Delazon Smith

<sup>22</sup> Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," pp. 278-279, 283-284.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas C. Cornell, *Adam and Anne Mott* (Poughkeepsie, 1890), pp. 129-132, 174, 198; John Cox, Jr., and Percy E. Clapp, "Quakers in Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XIV, 106-108; "Isaac Post," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XV, 117.

<sup>24</sup> Rev. F. W. Holland to Gerrit Smith, Rochester, 1844, *Calendar of Gerrit Smith Papers in Syracuse University Library, General Correspondence*, I, No. 899 (Historical Records Survey, WPA, Albany, 1941); Elizur Wright, *Myron Holley and What He Did for Liberty and True Religion* (Boston, 1882), pp. 311-312.

<sup>25</sup> Theodore D. Cook, *Memoir of Rev. James M. Cook* (Boston, 1854), pp. 77-252.

in 1838, barely survived their birth years, and the disciples of Tom Paine dropped from view by the mid-forties.<sup>26</sup>



Despite the never-ending organizational problems, so fervid were the religious energies of the community that older reforms prospered, while new sects and new humanitarian movements appeared. Though most of these movements were national in scope, Rochester's part in them frequently proved extensive. The pacifist agitation of the mid-thirties and the campaign for spelling reform afforded noteworthy exceptions,<sup>27</sup> but otherwise the Flour City maintained its reputation as a hotbed of "isms." Curiously, Jacksonianism, which Edwin Scrantom considered "worse than any other *ism*, not excepting *rhumatism*," enjoyed less success locally than in most parts of the country.<sup>28</sup>

Among the earlier religious activities maintained with vigor throughout these years were foreign missions, local Bible distribution, and the campaign for Sabbath observance. The increasing number of Rochesterians in foreign missions kept interest in the work alive and helped to broaden the community's horizon.<sup>29</sup> Local efforts in this field attracted praise in 1843 when the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions gathered at First Church to survey the work of the year.<sup>30</sup> The Monroe County Bible Society periodically renewed its attempt to place a Bible in every home, employing full-time agents on three occasions, when the distribution extended over two-year periods. Nearly two thousand Bibles were disposed of by the close of 1840, and four thousand more by the end of 1846, while the budget for the last three years of the decade totaled \$13,000.<sup>31</sup>

Less gratifying were the achievements of the Sabbath reformers. The reversals suffered by "Pioneerism" in the early thirties embarrassed the

<sup>26</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 6, 1835; Mrs. Marilla Marks, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of David Marks* (Dover, New Hampshire, 1847), pp. 354-356; Albert Post, *Popular Freehought in America*, pp. 60, 64-65.

<sup>27</sup> Ebenezer Mead, *War—Inconsistent with the Principles of the Gospel* (Albion, N. Y., 1835); *Genesee Ohio*, Mar. 25, Apr. 8, 22, 1848.

<sup>28</sup> Scrantom, *Diary*, July 17, 1837.

<sup>29</sup> Among the Rochester missionaries may be mentioned Miss Delia Stone, Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Webster, Rev. Nathan Benham, Miss Isabel Jane Atwater [White], Dr. Henry De Forest, Prof. George Loomis, Miss Fanny M. Nelson [McKinney], Miss H. Elizabeth Wright, Rev. Henry D. Rankin, and Rev. Grover S. Comstock. Their fields included Africa, China, Burma, Siam, Syria, and the Sandwich Islands. *Democrat*, May 22, 1835; July 12, 1839; *Roch. Republican*, Mar. 16, 1847; Sept. 27, 1849; *Advertiser*, Oct. 1, 1847; June 28, 1848; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 25, 217, *Roch. Hist. Soc.*; Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," pp. 265-266.

<sup>30</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 13, 14, 15, 1843.

<sup>31</sup> *Roch. Republican*, June 4, 1839; *Democrat*, Dec. 28, 1848; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 193; Monroe County Bible Society Record Book, pp. 42-55, MS, *Roch. Hist. Soc.*

movement for several years, moreover the increased activity of the city made the old standards of a quiet Sabbath difficult to maintain. The issue reappeared in 1841 when the farmers of nearby Gates complained against the desecration of their Sabbath by city dwellers, prompting several Rochester churchmen to call a convention at Bethel Church to consider the problem.<sup>32</sup> Memorials were adopted, urging the State to close the canals on that day and demanding the enforcement of existing regulations. Hope was expressed that if the canals closed, the railroads would follow suit, but the legislature quietly tabled the Rochester resolutions along with those from other parts of the State.<sup>33</sup> Many of the increasing number of reform agents, eager to get about the country quickly to their numerous appointments, were finding it desirable to travel on the Sabbath, and the agitation lost its force.<sup>34</sup>

An active Moral Reform Society held frequent meetings during the mid-thirties, enrolling some two hundred members pledged to combat licentiousness and shun loose male as well as female companions. But the number of expulsions increased after the first six months, and interest lagged when the leaders banned a free discussion of the issues involved. Sermons on the double standard were scheduled, but the society soon dropped from view.<sup>35</sup>

No doubt the agitation of the temperance reformers aroused the most interest. Though Mayor Child's dramatic resignation in 1835 terminated the first effort to limit the grant of grocery licenses, the several temperance societies soon redoubled their activities. A female temperance society was especially active, soliciting total abstinence pledges with such diligence that Monroe became one of three counties to secure pledges from 9.6 per cent of the population in 1839, when the state as a whole averaged but half as many.<sup>36</sup> The hardships of the depression, with its heavy burden for relief, prompted O'Reilly, Peck, and Child to draw up a balance sheet, which credited the city with \$946 in license fees in 1840 as against \$9,000 paid out for public relief, \$6,000 in private charity, \$65,000 squandered on liquor, another \$65,000 lost in wasted labor time, and \$5,000 in property damages, or a total of \$150,000 on the debit side.<sup>37</sup> A grand jury, after an examination of

<sup>32</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 12, 1841.

<sup>33</sup> *Democrat*, July 20, 21, 22, 23, 1842; *Penny Preacher*, July 21, 22, 1842; Senate Doc. (1844), Nos. 66, 119.

<sup>34</sup> *Penny Preacher*, Sept. 10, 1842.

<sup>35</sup> Moral Reform Society, Minute Book, 1836-1837, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Advertiser*, Nov. 9, 1833; *Rochester Daily Sun*, June 27, Nov. 21, 1839.

<sup>36</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, December 31, 1841; Jan. 25, 1842, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; John A. Krout, "The Genesis and Development of the Early Temperance Movement in New York State," N. Y. State Historical Assoc. *Quarterly Journal*, XXI (1923), 93-94.

<sup>37</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 21, 1841.

the jail inmates in 1842, finding that the great majority attributed their fall to liquor, declared that the crime cost should be added to the account.<sup>38</sup>

Frequent meetings rallied the temperance forces. Reformed drunkards, touring the country under the auspices of the Washingtonian Society, visited Rochester in 1843 and succeeding years, a canal boatmen's convention at Bethel Church indorsed the reform, and varied temperance societies of young men, young women, and Hibernians collected a total of six thousand teetotal pledges in the county within a period of eighteen months, while at least 500 drunkards were reported saved during the same period.<sup>39</sup>

The more ardent reformers, impatient for results, soon turned from the strategy of individual pledges to that of legislation. When the legislature, reluctant to assume responsibility, compromised with a local-option provision in 1845, a Western New York Temperance Convention met in the Methodist Chapel and promptly urged no-license policies on local authorities.<sup>40</sup> Fourteen hundred women, bemoaning their lack of the ballot, petitioned voters to safeguard their welfare at the polls, and candidates pledged to a no-license policy carried the city the next May, though the police were soon baffled by the number of liquor dealers operating without licenses.<sup>41</sup> As opinion gradually reacted against drastic measures, license candidates triumphed at the polls in April, 1847.<sup>42</sup> "Rochester is disgraced! Shame! Shame! Tell it not in Bath. . . . Buffalo and Albany keep dark!" mourned a local editor who soon pointed to the mounting crime statistics as progeny of "Liberty and License."<sup>43</sup> Yet it was no longer possible even to collect license fees from most dealers, and in 1849, when seventy licenses were issued, 400 other liquor dealers were reported in the community.<sup>44</sup>

Several leaders of these older reform movements became interested in new humanitarian causes. Myron Holley, who replaced Josiah Bissell as the stormy petrel of Rochester in the thirties, was not only an Antimason, strict Sabbatarian and temperance advocate, but an opponent of slavery, and a free churchman turned Unitarian. At his early death the banner of righteousness was carried forward by William C. Bloss, a reformed tavern keeper who championed most of the above causes

<sup>38</sup> *Penny Preacher*, Oct. 15, 1842.

<sup>39</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 24, Aug. 10, 1843; Aug. 14, Nov. 27, 1844; O'Reilly Doc., 1006, 1007, 1727, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *The Story of Sammy the Sailor Boy*, by a Bethel Man (Rochester, 1843), pp. 134-135.

<sup>40</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 23, 24, 1845.

<sup>41</sup> *Advertiser*, May 11, 18, 20, 1846; *Democrat*, June 9, 1846.

<sup>42</sup> *Advertiser*, May 21, 1846; *Democrat*, Feb. 24, 1847; *Genesee Ohio*, Mar. 27, Apr. 28, 1847; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> *Genesee Ohio*, Apr. 28, Sept. 4, 1847.

<sup>44</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 16, 1849.

and women's rights as well.<sup>45</sup> Each new movement attracted some fresh blood, but, once enrolled, most of the reformers—Samuel D. Porter, Isaac and Amy Post, and Frederick Douglass among others—gave generous support to every cause. Though curious crowds usually swelled the thin ranks of the reformers at their repeated "conventions," most Rochesterians, if interested at all, inclined to follow the more moderate leadership of such men as Henry O'Reilly, Levi A. Ward, and Dr. Chester Dewey.

Interest in the plight of the slave gained active expression locally during the mid-thirties. The organization of the Rochester Anti-Slavery Society in 1833 and the launching at the end of the year of William C. Bloss's *Rights of Man* preceded by a few months the formation of a Monroe County Anti-slavery Society.<sup>46</sup> Addresses by young H. B. Stanton and the zealous Theodore Weld roused sufficient excitement to alarm moderates and practical politicians, who called a public meeting at the Court House to indorse Henry O'Reilly's resolutions censoring the abolitionists and declaring the issue to be one for solution in the South.<sup>47</sup> The issue of slavery in the District of Columbia could not be dodged,<sup>48</sup> however, and the fears of the politicians seemed justified a few years later when Myron Holley established the *Rochester Freeman*, advocating resort to the ballot box. That appeal split the small band of Rochester reformers into two factions, with such local Quakers as Isaac and Amy Post adhering to Garrison's nonpolitical policies, while Samuel D. Porter, Silas Cornell, and others supported the Liberty Party. The handful who favored political action staged frequent public meetings but achieved insignificant results at the polls. Indeed in 1844, a short month after candidate James G. Birney addressed a public gathering in Rochester, the party secured but 93 local votes.<sup>49</sup>

The problem had not only moral and political but also practical neighborhood aspects, since a small but respectable group of Negro

<sup>45</sup> *A Conversation in which the Order of the Sons of Temperance Is Defended* (Rochester, 1846); Sons of Temperance "Black Book" (1848-1852), MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; *Roch. Republican*, June 14, 1849; *Calendar of Gerrit Smith Papers*; Myron Holley Letters, O'Reilly Doc., Nos. 2461-2477; *Post-Express*, Sept. 23, 1893.

<sup>46</sup> *Rochester Daily American*, Nov. 16, Dec. 30, 1833; *Democrat*, July 23, Aug. 4, 1834; *Rights of Man*, Apr. 26, May 10, 24, June 7, 21, July 4, 1834.

<sup>47</sup> *Democrat*, June 16, 1834; Sept. 24, 26, 1835; O'Reilly Doc., No. 30e; Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse*, p. 85.

<sup>48</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 4, Sept. 24, 1835.

<sup>49</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Jan. 28, 1838, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Myron Holley to Gerrit Smith, Jan. 12, June 1, 1839; Mar. 9, 20, 1840; George W. Pratt to Gerrit Smith, Dec. 16, 1844, *Calendar of Gerrit Smith Papers*; Myron Holley to James G. Birney, Rochester, Jan. 1, 1840, D. L. Dumond, ed., *Letters of James Gillespie Birney: 1831-1857* (New York, 1938), I, 518-519; Amy H. Croughton, "Anti-Slavery Days in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 120-126; *Rochester Freeman*, June 12, 1839.



residents supplied a local setting for the larger controversy. As many as 360 Negroes lived in the city in 1834, among them Thomas James and Austin Steward, both men of some ability.<sup>50</sup> A separate school had already been provided for their children, though in most unsatisfactory quarters, but the efforts of Levi A. Ward in 1841 to secure a new building for this purpose proved unsuccessful. Occasionally a Negro child attended one of the district schools until, in 1845, the council put an end to that practice. When Frederick Douglass located his *North Star* at Rochester in 1847, the school question presented a difficult problem, and despite the efforts of many friends the policy of segregation remained a cause of complaint until the mid-century, with less than a third of the sixty-odd Negro children on the school rolls.<sup>51</sup>

Possibly the chief accomplishment of the Rochester abolitionists during the forties was the respectful hearing they enjoyed. While their two early weeklies had quickly disappeared, and Henry O'Reilly's effort to establish the moderate antislavery *Citizen* in 1843 met disaster,<sup>52</sup> Frederick Douglass, backed with English capital, proved more successful with his *North Star* in 1847, soon renamed *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.<sup>53</sup> A state convention of Negroes gathered in the city in 1843, the year in which Douglass paid his first visit, and three years later an antislavery convention met peaceably in Rochester. New friends were won to the cause and funds collected at an antislavery bazaar held at Concert Hall in 1849. Rochester's newly elected Whig representative in the legislature, L. Ward Smith, grandson of Dr. Levi Ward, declared his sympathy for the Negro, promising to do what he could in behalf of the slave.<sup>54</sup> Friendly aid was occasionally given to slaves fleeing from the South, chiefly by a few members of the Wesleyan, Congregational, Quaker, and Unitarian churches; yet the community remained largely indifferent to the issue.

An increasing participation of zealous women in these reform movements gave birth to still another agitation, that for women's rights. The early activities of the Female Charitable Society and of several public and private school teachers had received local approbation, and in 1842

<sup>50</sup> *Rights of Man*, Apr. 26, 1834; Thomas James, *Wonderful Eventful Life of Reverend Thomas James* (3rd ed.; Rochester, 1887); Austin Steward, *Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman* (Rochester, 1857).

<sup>51</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 24, 1832; Feb. 28, 1833; July 2, 1841; Jan. 17, 1850; *Democrat*, July 12, 1841; Dec. 14, 1849; Mar. 29, 1850; Croughton, "Anti-Slavery Days," p. 130.

<sup>52</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 1063, 1521.

<sup>53</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, Conn., 1882), pp. 322-328; *North Star*, Apr. 14, 1848; June 13, 1850; *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, Aug. 19, 1853; Aug. 31, 1855; Apr. 25, 1856; Jan. 16, 1857; *Douglass' Monthly*, April, May, 1859; July, August, 1862.

<sup>54</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 23, 29, 1843; Mar. 28, 1846; Nov. 4, 1848; *Advertiser*, Jan. 15, 1849.

when Abby Kelly came to Rochester to address an antislavery convention, her ability to hold the audience for three-quarters of an hour was noted with respect.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, when the Ladies Temperance Society formed in 1841, and the Young Ladies Temperance Hope Society the next year, many whose interests appeared threatened expressed the opinion that women's place was in the home.<sup>56</sup>

The women, however, were not to be turned back so easily. Their new freedom of expression, enjoyed on an equal footing with the men-folk in the numerous revivals, in the Sabbath schools and other church societies, had quickened their spirits. When the American Female Moral Reform Society staged a convention at Rochester in 1843, although Pharcellus Church presided, several ladies ventured to take part in the discussion.<sup>57</sup> News of the rebuffs received by sister reformers at various temperance and antislavery conclaves roused local resentment, and a few weeks after the first woman's suffrage convention met at Seneca Falls in July, 1848, a second convened at the Unitarian Church in Rochester.<sup>58</sup> For the first time a woman, Mrs. Abigail Bush, was elected chairman, while Amy Post, Rhoda De Garmo, and Mrs. Roberts—likewise well known for their earlier activity in local temperance and antislavery agitation—assumed active roles. Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, both related by marriage to Rochester families, joined with other visitors in the discussion, as did several men, including Frederick Douglass and Daniel Anthony.<sup>59</sup>

Popular reactions to these sessions varied. One editor derived amusement from the resolution that the word "obey" should be stricken from the marriage vow, while another remarked that "Verily, this is a 'progressive' era!"<sup>60</sup> Specific local action resulted from Mrs. Roberts' report on working conditions in the city, revealing that seamstresses worked fourteen and fifteen hours for from 31 to 38 cents a day, although their frugal board cost \$1.25 to \$1.50 a week. Two weeks after the close of the convention a meeting of seamstresses in Mechanic's Hall organized a Women's Protection Union, choosing Mrs. Roberts as president. Equal rights with men, wages in cash, and regular hour and piece rates com-

<sup>55</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 27, 1842; Schermerhorn Letters, Aug. 29, 1842; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, II, 323.

<sup>56</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Jan. 29, 1839; *Democrat*, Nov. 26, 1841; Feb. 17, 1844; *Advertiser*, Apr. 30, 1846.

<sup>57</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 8, 1843. A local Female Moral Reform Society continued active for some years, see Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Aug. 26, 1846, E. S. S. Eaton Letters.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton *et al.*, *History of Woman Suffrage* (New York, 1881), I, 67-76.

<sup>59</sup> Stanton, *Woman Suffrage*, pp. 75-79; Cornell, *Adam and Anne Mott*, pp. 138, 145-46; *Advertiser*, Aug. 3, 1848; *Democrat*, Aug. 2, 3, 4, 1848.

<sup>60</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 3, 8, 1848; *Democrat*, Aug. 4, 1848.

prised the chief demands. Little is known of the Union's accomplishments, but at least the issue was kept before the public by occasional meetings that year.<sup>61</sup>

Other reforms of the forties received less attention. The anti-tobacco campaign enlisted few supporters, while tobacco-growers, cutters, and cigar makers increased in number.<sup>62</sup> A local Prison Discipline Society, organized in 1847, helped to secure the establishment of the Western House of Refuge at Rochester in 1849.<sup>63</sup> Sympathy for famine sufferers in Ireland and for the cause of Irish independence inspired frequent collections, while Rochesterians only thinly disguised their active partisanship during the Canadian Rebellion of 1837.<sup>64</sup> Mixed feelings greeted the agitation by Albert Brisbane of the Fourier Phalanx, which reached Rochester in the spring of 1843 when the gloom of the depression still darkened the sky. Fourier's communistic scheme won a hearing at a series of lectures in Mechanic's Hall. Several societies quickly organized in the area, and sites were purchased at Manchester, Sodus Bay, Clarkson, and North Bloomfield. A convention of Fourier sympathizers held at Rochester in August, 1843, formed the American Industrial Union to coördinate their various endeavors. Charges that the movement was anti-Christian were denied, but economic and social difficulties within the societies soon brought disaster, and the movement lost its force locally after 1845.<sup>65</sup>

As scriptural references generally provided the most telling arguments, authority for each of these causes was sought in the Bible. Indeed, interest in the successive reforms (if distinguished from their accomplishments) seemed to vary in proportion to their religious inspiration, and certainly no other movements stirred the excitement created by the appearance of two new sects. Joseph Smith had already led his Mormon followers farther into the West, though interest in the fortunes of this unusual sect, born at nearby Palmyra only a few years before, continued throughout the period.<sup>66</sup> Smith's claims were remarkable enough, but, true or false, they did not threaten the foundations of society, as was the case, first with the predictions of the Millerites, and later with the occult powers of the Fox sisters.

<sup>61</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 3, 1848; *Democrat*, Aug. 18, Sept. 2, 25, 1848.

<sup>62</sup> *Rock. Republican*, Dec. 22, 1846; Feb. 16, July 20, 1847; *Democrat*, Feb. 9, 1847.

<sup>63</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 22, 1844; Feb. 4, 1847.

<sup>64</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 15, 1847; Aug. 31, 1849; Feb. 21, 1850; *Rock. Republican*, June 1, 1847; *Advertiser*, Aug. 14, 1848; *Common Council Proc.*, Nov. 13, 1838.

<sup>65</sup> *Rock. Republican*, Apr. 11, Sept. 5, Nov. 7, 1843; *Democrat*, Apr. 7, 18, 20, May 18, Aug. 23, 29, 1843; June 25, 1845; *American Industrial Union: Articles of Confederation* (Rochester, 1844).

<sup>66</sup> *Advertiser*, July 20, 28, 1842; Mar. 3, 1847; Nov. 17, 1849; *Democrat*, Aug. 5, 1844; *United States Statistical and Chronological Almanac* (Rochester, 1845), p. 42.

The doctrine of William Miller, based on an interpretation of Old and New Testament prophecies, created a stir in Rochester as elsewhere. Miller's writings reached the city in the late thirties,<sup>67</sup> and by the spring of 1842, when many earthly fortunes had reached their lowest ebb, local confidence in the rapid approach of the Second Coming was sufficient to open a camp meeting under a great tent on the eastern edge of the city. Three of Miller's close brethren arrived with a supply of Second Advent books, and large crowds began to gather.<sup>68</sup> High winds capsized the tent on two occasions, yet it served well the purpose of propagating the doctrine throughout the area that fall. When a convention of Millerites assembled at Talman Hall the next spring, a goodly representation gathered from the city and the surrounding towns to plan the proper ceremonies for Christ's Second Coming, now definitely expected sometime during the current Hebraic year which would end on March 21, 1844. As the fateful year advanced, many converts applied for baptism, and the Reverend Joseph Marsh kept busy at his office in the Reynolds Arcade answering questions, assembling copy for the *Voice of Truth*, and otherwise preparing for the ascension of the saints.<sup>69</sup> Many citizens breathed more easily when the last day of the appointed year passed without event, yet popular excitement revived when a new calculation advanced the date to October 22nd. A large crowd gathered in Talman Hall on the evening of the 21st and again the next day, making preparations to greet their Lord with song and prayer. Fresh converts were baptized and great confidence was expressed in the impending event. The papers the next day, preoccupied with the approaching election, failed to report the disappointment of the Millerites, but the latter's faith proved resilient when soon a new date was set for 1847. Even after that year had likewise safely passed, a group of Second Adventists gathered for a baptism in the Genesee below Andrews Street Bridge, though the ceremony now attracted only a small crowd.<sup>70</sup>

Already a new religious sensation was at hand, the mysterious knockings by the spirit friends of the Fox sisters. Rumors of strange occurrences at Hydesville reached the city in the late spring of 1848, and when Mrs. Leah Fish, a local music teacher, brought her sister Kate, the youngest Fox girl, to live with her in Rochester, the rappings recommenced. The zealous Quaker reformers, Isaac and Amy Post, in-

<sup>67</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Nov. 7, 1839, E. S. S. Eaton Letters.

<sup>68</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 21, 1842; *Democrat*, June 10, 17, 19, 23, 24, 28, July 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 1843; *D. A. B.*, XII, 641-643.

<sup>69</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 9, 13, 23, 1844; Jane Marsh Parker, *Rochester, A Story Historical*, pp. 251-254. Mrs. Parker, as a daughter of Rev. Marsh, the Millerite, had many family traditions at her disposal. See also Clara E. Sears, *Days of Delusion* (Cambridge, 1924), pp. 133-137, 140-141ff.

<sup>70</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 18, 19, 23, 1844; *Advertiser*, Oct. 21, 1845; Sept. 19, 1848.

trigued by the possibility of communicating with the spirits of their departed friends, became early converts. Despite the meager and circumstantial information vouchsafed from the other world, the possibility of such communication proved startling enough to attract several followers. Soon the spirits, desiring a wider audience, specifically demanded a public demonstration in the newly opened Corinthian Hall. The request was granted on November 14, 1849, as a crowd of some four hundred persons gathered to watch the world's first public performance of spirit mediums.<sup>71</sup>

When the knockings responded as advertised, the incredulous audience named a committee of citizens to investigate and report the true cause of the sounds at an adjourned meeting the next evening. However, the first committee had to admit its inability to detect fraud, and a second committee likewise failed, prompting skeptical members of the third and now crowded audience to demand a thorough investigation. A new committee, including several distinguished physicians among other citizens, secured the assistance of three ladies, who examined the girls in a private room, removing their clothes and interviewing the spirits while the girls stood on feather pillows in their bare feet. When the third committee reported that no natural source for the sounds could be detected, a surge of indignation swept the crowded hall and some angry skeptics attempted to storm the platform. Fortunately the girls escaped injury, and the conflict was transferred to the press.<sup>72</sup> D. M. Dewey sold 30,000 copies of his pamphlet, *History of the Strange Sounds or Rappings*, while, among numerous explanations, Professor George Loomis of Lima Seminary attributed the rappings to vibrations from the falls.<sup>73</sup> Others took the matter more seriously, notably the aged Abelard Reynolds, who was greatly impressed by this additional evidence of a life after death.<sup>74</sup> A band of devoted followers soon enrolled, though few tears were shed when the Fox sisters left for New York the next spring. Isaac Butts, the caustic editor of the *Advertiser*, dismissed the knockings as another of Rochester's recurrent "Humbugs."<sup>75</sup>



Despite the sensational performances of the spiritualists and an increasing acceptance of the idea of progress,<sup>76</sup> the late forties witnessed

<sup>71</sup> Franklin W. Clark, "The Rochester Rappers," MS of 1930, in Roch. Hist. Soc.; Adelbert Cronise, "The Beginnings of Modern Spiritualism In and Near Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, V, 1-22. See also two long Lemuel Clark letters, Nov. 1, Dec. 1, 1848, edited by Wheaton P. Webb, *New York History*, XXIV (April, 1943), 228-250.

<sup>72</sup> Cronise, "Beginnings of Modern Spiritualism," pp. 9-11.

<sup>73</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 17, 1850; *Rural New Yorker*, Feb. 7, 1850.

<sup>74</sup> Reynolds Papers, 1850-1852.

<sup>75</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 30, May 3, 1850; *Dict. Amer. Biog.*, III, 378-379.

<sup>76</sup> *Genesee Ohio*, Apr. 19, 1849, p. 69. "The man who doubts in human progress commits the unpardonable sin. To doubt progression is to blaspheme God."

a conservative trend within several of the leading denominations. A half-dozen new churches appeared, increasing the total number to thirty-five by the mid-century, but only two, the Universalist Church erected in 1847, and the Berith Kodesh Synagogue organized the following year, represented the permanent establishment of new sects in the city.<sup>77</sup> Rochester clerics were less outspoken than many of their brethren elsewhere either in opposition to or support of the Mexican War.<sup>78</sup> Local economic revival enabled several of the congregations to balance their budgets, reduce their debts, in some cases even to enlarge their buildings, so that the community became known for its handsome churches and its distinguished pastors. If some of the evangelical romanticism of its early religious activity disappeared, a new sobriety and appreciation for both educational and institutional values emerged.<sup>79</sup>

Religious customs tended to conform to the urban environment. Two small papers, *The Closet*, and its successor, *The Christian Mirror*, mourned the increased neglect of family worship and the absence of old devotional stand-bys on the parlor table. The attendance at the midweek meetings proved discouraging, except during revival periods, and the frequency, duration, and intensity of the revivals decreased in the larger city churches during the late forties.<sup>80</sup> Too many other activities engrossed the bustling city, impelling one aging pioneer circuit rider, who marvelled at how "villages and cities have sprung up, and occupy the hunting grounds of the aborigines," to wonder at the effect on the Christian citizen.<sup>81</sup>

Doctrinal issues nevertheless retained some potency. Despite the moderation of the nominally New School Presbyterians of Rochester, the Reverend Lewis Cheeseman tried to establish an Old School church in the city; yet the venture quickly disintegrated when Cheeseman received a call to Philadelphia.<sup>82</sup> When the controversy between High and Low Church Episcopalians revived over the leanings of Dr. E. B. Pusey and his Oxford followers toward Catholic forms, Henry W. Lee denounced such trends from the pulpit at St. Luke's. On the other hand, John Van Ingen stood forth in St. Paul's as the High Church leader of

<sup>77</sup> Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," pp. 288-291; Rabbi Horace J. Wolf, "A History of the Jews of Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 191-196.

<sup>78</sup> *Advertiser*, May 28, 1846; Aug. 21, 1847; *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 24, 1847; C. S. Ellsworth, "The American Churches and the Mexican War," *Amer. Hist. Review*, vol. XLV (January, 1940).

<sup>79</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 21, newspaper clipping of 1847.

<sup>80</sup> *The Closet* (Rochester), 1846-1847; *The Christian Mirror* (Rochester), 1847-1848.

<sup>81</sup> Tooker, *Poems and Jottings*, p. 113. See also [J. B. Hudson], *Narrative of the Christian Experience, Travels and Labors of John B. Hudson* (Rochester, 1838), pp. 163-164.

<sup>82</sup> William C. Wisner, *A Review of "Differences between Old and New School Presbyterians" by Rev. Lewis Cheeseman* (Rochester, 1848).

the diocese, though he was cautious about introducing the disputed rituals.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, with Rochester emerging as a focal center of the controversy, feelings became so strained at St. Paul's that it proved difficult for members to discuss religious questions in harmony. J. T. Andrews confided to his Weather Book on one occasion that "a bell [thought to be concealed under a deacon's robe] was heard tinkling in the service after the manner of the Papists." Yet the incident was soon forgotten when the installation of a fine organ costing \$1400 and a bell weighing 3065 pounds enabled St. Paul's, rebuilt after the fire and renamed Grace Church, to face the future with composure.<sup>84</sup>

The Catholics likewise encountered difficulties. Outside hostility, though less outspoken than in many communities, frequently burst forth. The labors of a Bible Society agent among newly arrived Germans in 1848 prompted thirty-six families to proclaim their renunciation of Catholicism and organize the Emanuel Reformed Church with the Reverend L. Giustiniani, a thorn in the side of faithful Catholics, as its first pastor. The next year, when Father Bernard O'Reilly refused to proceed with a funeral service until all Odd Fellow badges should be removed, several members of that newly formed lodge withdrew.<sup>85</sup> Yet the rapid growth of the three Catholic churches continued unchecked, and the newly reorganized St. Mary's erected an edifice in 1847. When the Diocese of Buffalo was set off from that of New York in 1847, Father O'Reilly became vicar-general, and three years later he journeyed east as Bishop of Hartford.<sup>86</sup>

Father O'Reilly was only one of several Rochester pastors of the period whose abilities brought high honors. Both Joseph Penney and his successor at First Church, Tryon Edwards, became college presidents, while Henry J. Whitehouse was called from St. Luke's to accept the Episcopate of Illinois in 1844. Drs. Church, Luckey, McIlwaine, Holland, and Van Ingen never achieved such rank, though Dr. Lee did

<sup>83</sup> Rev. John V. Van Ingen, A.M., *The Preacher, An Ordained Witness of Revealed Truth* (Rochester, 1845); *Remarks upon "The Papal Aggression" Occasioned by the Discourses of the Rev. H. W. Lee at St. Luke's Church* (1851); *Memoir of John Visger Van Ingen* (n.d., n.p.); Charles W. Hayes, *The Diocese of Western New York* (Rochester, 1904), I, 181-187.

<sup>84</sup> J. T. Andrews, Weather Book, Jan., 1849, Jan., May, 1850, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>85</sup> Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," p. 294; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 193-194; Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade: 1800-1860* (New York, 1938), p. 308. When Giustiniani withdrew to repeat his work elsewhere, the church, assuming a less obtrusive role, continued a modest development.

<sup>86</sup> *Advertiser*, Sept. 2, Dec. 22, 1847; Sept. 5, 1850. Despite the persistence of much suspicion and ill-will, Rochester escaped the more extreme expressions of anti-Catholicism that appeared in New York City and elsewhere during the forties under the banner of the American Republicans or the Native Americans; see Louis Dow Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York State* (New York, 1901), pp. 15-83.

become a bishop in 1854, but all were outstanding leaders of their denominations, and one of Dr. Church's publications anticipated the doctrine of the unity of natural and spiritual law.<sup>87</sup> Possibly none of these regular pastors was more highly respected throughout the community than Dr. Chester Dewey, whose readiness to supply any vacant pulpit each Sabbath did not seem to diminish despite the increased burdens of the Collegiate Institute. Indeed, Dewey symbolized the union between piety and learning that was fast becoming the ideal of Christian Rochesterians, and many rejoiced in 1850 when Williams College awarded him an LL.D., his third such honor during the decade.<sup>88</sup>

With the merits of a trained clergy gaining fuller recognition, various denominational leaders in the city coveted the advantages of a seminary in Rochester. As early as 1826, when the support of local Episcopal churches had rallied to the aid of Geneva College, regrets were expressed that the institution could not be located at Rochester.<sup>89</sup> Local Methodist support was similarly called upon for the development of Genesee Wesleyan Seminary at Lima after 1831.<sup>90</sup> The Presbyterians had early given support to Hamilton College, and when the former Rochester pastor, Joseph Penney, became its president in 1833, Rochester friends pledged themselves to pay his salary. But again the arrangement did not satisfy local aspirations, and a movement started at First Church in 1845 for the establishment of a Presbyterian college at Rochester.<sup>91</sup>

First conceived as a University of Western New York and later as a University of Rochester, the project gained wide support throughout the area in 1846. Dr. Dewey endorsed the movement, a charter was secured from the legislature, and a board was appointed to raise the \$120,000 considered necessary to establish the university. Pharcellus Church, pastor of First Baptist, F. W. Holland the Unitarian, and Samuel Luckey the Methodist, as well as the Mechanics Association, lent support with the understanding that the college would not be strictly denominational in character. Yet fear that the seventeen Presbyterians on the Board would dominate the institution and that the theological branches would crowd out scientific subjects, coupled with

<sup>87</sup> Price, "One Hundred Years of Protestantism," p. 302; Pharcellus Church, *Antioch or the Increase of Moral Power in the Church of Christ* (Boston, 1843); "Henry W. Lee," *Nat. Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, III, 469. Rev. Samuel Luckey, as Presiding Elder of the Rochester District, supplied stable leadership to the rapidly moving Methodist pastors from 1842 until his death in 1869; see T. W. Herringshaw, *Encyclopedia of American Biography* (Chicago, 1898), p. 603.

<sup>88</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 24, 1850; Henry Fowler, *The American Pulpit* (New York, 1856), pp. 49-67.

<sup>89</sup> *Telegraph*, Feb. 7, 1826; *Monroe Republican*, Feb. 14, Mar. 7, July 4, 1826; *Advertiser*, Jan. 21, Apr. 26, 1831.

<sup>90</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 12, 1831, Nov. 1, 1832; Mar. 11, Apr. 2, 1833.

<sup>91</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 16, 1833; Harvey Humphrey, Autograph Letters, Roch. Hist. Soc., Dec. 26, 1844; *Democrat*, Jan. 23, Mar. 11, 1845.



the difficulties Presbyterians were already encountering in their effort to maintain Lane, Western Reserve, and Oberlin in the West, led finally to the abandonment of the Rochester venture.<sup>92</sup>

Local aspirations for an institution of college rank soon reasserted themselves, however. Rochester Catholics, disappointed in the late thirties when the Redemptorist foundation which they had sought was located at Pittsburgh, and when Buffalo became the center of the new diocese, turned eagerly to plans for the location of a Catholic college on the Mumford estate overlooking the river at Court and South St. Paul streets. The College of the Sacred Heart opened in September, 1848, with the object of preparing its boys "chiefly for the ministry," but the untimely death that fall of its head, Father Julian Delaune, formerly president of St. Mary's College in Kentucky, forced the institution to close its doors.<sup>93</sup> Thus the field remained open to the Baptists, possibly the weakest of the five leading sects in the city.

The final establishment of a university at Rochester was curiously related to the evangelistic forces that had stirred the city for two decades. The same Elder Jacob Knapp who had enlivened the spirits of the First Baptist Church in the late thirties was a decade later troubling the intellectual waters at Madison University, the reorganized Baptist Literary and Theological Institution at Hamilton in central New York. Disturbed over the local controversy and dismayed by the difficulty of securing financial support in a somewhat isolated neighborhood, several of the faculty and trustees considered the possibility of removal to Rochester. A conference at the First Baptist Church in September, 1847, won endorsements for the proposed removal both from the pastor, Pharcellus Church, one of Madison's trustees, and from his leading deacons, Oren Sage and Alvah Strong. John N. Wilder, a Madison trustee from Albany but well-known in Rochester after frequent visits at the home of his sister, the first wife of Everard Peck, volunteered support. Western New York Baptists generally favored the proposal, and many Rochesterians, previously identified with the abortive plan of 1846, rallied to the new project.<sup>94</sup>

The determined resistance of Hamilton residents finally secured a court order, stopping the removal plan, but Rochester's desires for a college could not be checked this time, and in March, 1850, a charter was secured from the Regents for a new University of Rochester. The great majority of the trustees of the new institution were Baptists, but

<sup>92</sup> *Roch. Republican*, July 14, Nov. 24, Dec. 8, 29, 1846; Jan. 5, 19, 1847; *Democrat*, Jan. 18, Feb. 8, 24, 1847; Jesse L. Rosenberger, *Rochester and Colgate* (Chicago, 1925), pp. 13-21.

<sup>93</sup> *Democrat*, May 1, 1848; Zwierlein, *One Hundred Years of Catholicism*, pp. 207-208; Mullaney, *Catholic Germans in Rochester*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>94</sup> Rosenberger, *Rochester and Colgate*, pp. 46-98; Jesse L. Rosenberger, *Rochester, the Making of a University* (Rochester, 1927), pp. 1-16.

Everard Peck, Frederick Whittlesey and William Pitkin, three of the city's eight trustees, represented other denominations, while the sixteen non-Rochesterians on the board helped to give the venture a broad character. An earnest appeal for \$100,000 to launch both the university and a theological seminary prompted a non-Baptist correspondent, possibly Chester Dewey, to conclude a letter of support with the suggestion, "Let not sectarianism paralyze our efforts as it did two years ago." Proclaiming the Christian, but unsectarian, character of the university, its leaders promised that instruction would be given in "all the branches of science and learning which are taught in the most approved universities." The United States Hotel on Buffalo Street was leased for temporary quarters, and a faculty of five college and two seminary professors, each to receive \$1200 a year, assembled. Five of them came from Madison University, while E. Peshine Smith (one of Rochester's first Harvard men) and the venerable Dr. Chester Dewey were respected residents. When the institutions officially opened to about sixty students on November 4, 1850, John N. Wilder, President of the Board of Trustees, noted the general objection to the location of colleges in cities, but expressed the hope that, although (excepting Columbia in New York City) Rochester University was the first so located, the enterprise would prove the wisdom of the choice.<sup>95</sup>

#### DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

Rochester's struggle to secure a university prompted an ironic jibe from neighboring Syracuse. "No peacock ever swelled into larger proportions," declared the *Syracuse Star*, "or strutted about in a more complacent and happy air, than our Rochester neighbors assume when they talk of 'our position,' 'our location,' 'our advantages.' . . . What adds to the exceeding richness of all this, is the fact that the [Rochester] editors actually believe what they say." Isaac Butts of the *Advertiser*, rejoining with a few digs at the village just then applying for its first pair of long trousers, admitted that his own townsfellows had cause to be proud.<sup>96</sup> Frequent visitors were obligingly laudatory. "The entrance to Rochester, from the West, is impressive," remarked Willis Gaylord Clark in an exuberant mood, "and when you are once rattling over its pavements and through its long streets, you fancy yourself in New York or eke in Philadelphia."<sup>97</sup> Mrs. Eliza Steele, the novelist, declared that

<sup>95</sup> Rosenberger, *Making of a University*, pp. 17-43; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 259. Another Rochester lawyer, Alfred G. Mudge, attended Harvard Law School a few years ahead of E. P. Smith, but the latter was apparently the first native to enter Harvard; Yale was much preferred.

<sup>96</sup> *Advertiser*, Nov. 22, 1847.

<sup>97</sup> Lewis G. Clark, ed., *Literary Remains of the Late Willis Gaylord Clark* (New York, 1844), pp. 174-175.

"what most elicited our admiration were the private dwellings, which in number and beauty are seldom equalled in our cities." <sup>98</sup>

A marked improvement in domestic comforts characterized the period. The more moderate population growth of the forties enabled builders to catch up with the demand for houses, and while modest frame cottages proved most numerous, a goodly number of Greek Revival mansions and "Ornamental Gothic" villas graced the more desirable streets. The eleven-room Elmwood Cottage of Captain Robert Harding, built in the new Gothic style in a rural setting on Genesee Street at a cost of \$2,300, provided a striking contrast to Silas O. Smith's dignified Woodside, erected in the popular Greek Revival fashion on Pittsford Road (East Avenue) on the other side of town.<sup>99</sup> More extensive than either was Grove Place at the eastern end of Main Street, acquired in 1839 by Samuel L. Selden, who paid \$20,000 for the mansion and its twenty-acre estate. Here the Ward and Selden families congregated in a rambling homestead which slowly extended in several directions on functional rather than stylistic lines.<sup>100</sup> Other imposing mansions or villas occupied favored sites on the roads leading north and south on both sides of the river and on Pittsford Road and Buffalo Street.<sup>101</sup>

But most of the elegant residences appeared in the sheltered part of the Third Ward, separated from the principal business district by the Erie Canal. Charming post-Colonial houses alternated with the more pretentious façades of such Greek Revival mansions as that of Jonathan Child on Washington Street. A skilled architect from New England, Hugh Hastings, designed several of the classical mansions, including the elegant Whittlesey residence opening on Fitzhugh Street. That street as well as Sophia (Plymouth) and Washington, running parallel, Spring and Troup at right angles, and Livingston Park overlooking the section, provided a congenial center for culture and refinement.<sup>102</sup> Two elegant

<sup>98</sup> E. R. Steele, *A Summer Journey* (New York, 1841), pp. 46-47; Sir Charles Lyell, *Travels in North America*, I, 17. For an excellent discussion of dwelling standards throughout pre-Civil War America, see Edgar W. Martin, *The Standard of Living in 1860* (Chicago, 1944), pp. 83-172.

<sup>99</sup> Both are still standing in 1945, the first as a Spiritualist church and the latter as the home of the Rochester Historical Society. *Genesee Farmer*, February, 1846, p. 42.

<sup>100</sup> Henry M. Ward, *Memorials of a Grand Parent and Parents* (Rochester, 1886), pp. 21-23; Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to Captain Eaton, Rochester, Dec. 2, 1839, Aug. 18, 26, 1846, E. S. S. Eaton Letters.

<sup>101</sup> "Grove Place is decidedly delightful—Judge Chapin's place [on Caledonia Square] is still more exquisitely beautiful." "The three or four places: Grove Place, Mr. Smith's place, Mr. Chapin's & Lorimer Hill [the Freeman Clarke mansion on Lake Avenue] are as inviting and lovely as the country affords anywhere." E. S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Aug. 18, 26, 1846, E. S. S. Eaton Letters.

<sup>102</sup> Walter H. Cassebeer, "Architecture in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 290-295; Charles F. Pond, "History of the Third Ward," R. H. S., *Pub.*, I, 71-81.

seminaries opened there during the period, and several of the principal churches as well as the University stood only a few blocks distant. It was in the Third Ward that a visitor of 1847 saw the "splendid mansions" he found lacking in Buffalo, more preoccupied with trade.<sup>108</sup>

Spacious as some of these houses appeared, they were generally overflowing with residents. Large families proved the rule, so much so that J. T. Andrews was provoked on one occasion, when shouts from the street disturbed his Sabbath rest, to record in his Weather Book that "Rochester [is] terribly infested with children."<sup>104</sup> Indeed, 22 per cent of the city's population fell between the ages of five and sixteen in 1845, and men no longer outnumbered women.<sup>105</sup> Edwin Scrantom was glad in April, 1844 (when six youngsters crowded his small house on Sophia Street), for the opportunity to move into more spacious Willowbank on the western edge of the city, three-fourths of a mile from the central bridge. The good house and barn surrounded by one hundred fruit trees on a lot an acre and a half in size cost him \$2500, but the Scrantom family had at last acquired an established position in the community.<sup>106</sup>

A high rate of mortality, especially among infants, helped to keep most families within bounds, though not without exerting a profound influence upon the survivors, as the doleful and dripping verses of Marcia Webster and other poets of the period reveal.<sup>107</sup> When the mortality rate per 100 mounted from 1.98 in 1845 to 2.66 in 1847, blame was placed on the abnormal prevalence of disease throughout the country, a condition indicated by the advance of Boston's rate from 2.26 to 3.13 during the same period. Of the 737 deaths recorded by the City Sexton in 1847, out of a population of 28,000, those of three years or less numbered 333.<sup>108</sup> The next year one editor observed "nine funerals in the city one day last week, all of children under eight years of age."<sup>109</sup> Levi A. Ward, one of old Dr. Ward's thirteen children, eleven of whom reached maturity, saved only six of his own twelve children, while Edwin Scrantom saved five out of ten. Little wonder the community took such a sentimental interest in its lovely Mount Hope Cemetery.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *New York Herald*, Sept. 15, 1847.

<sup>104</sup> J. T. Andrews, Weather Book, August, 1847.

<sup>105</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1845). A century later only 16 per cent of the city's population in 1940 belonged to the 5 to 16 age group and women now definitely outnumbered men. Also see above, p. 137, note 3.

<sup>106</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, Apr. 4, 1844; W. A. Campbell, "A Chronicle of Architecture and Architects in Rochester" (multigraphed paper, 1939), Roch. Hist. Soc. The present-day "Willobank" is the second on this site.

<sup>107</sup> "A Tale of Mount Hope," by Marcia Webster, Raymond Scrapbook, p. 23, also pp. 54, 59, 66, 74, 107; *Rochester Gem*, 1829-1843, *passim*.

<sup>108</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 22. See also pp. 105-106, and note 20, p. 140.

<sup>109</sup> *Genesee Ohio*, Sept. 9, 1848.

<sup>110</sup> Alexander Mackay, *The Western World* (London, 1850), III, 112.

While numerous diseases brought appalling hazards, an increasing number of practitioners struggled to check such ravages. The community in 1844 contained thirty-one "practicing physicians" and fourteen dentists, several of whom enjoyed a wide reputation. Dr. John B. Elwood, reputed to be "the best operator in the city," successfully removed "a stone the size of a hen's egg from Mrs. Hertell's bladder in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour" in 1837.<sup>111</sup> Equally noted were Dr. Edward G. Munn for his deft work on the eye, Dr. W. W. Reid as an expert in adjusting dislocated hip bones, Dr. Horatio N. Fenn as a dental surgeon, and young Dr. Edward Mott Moore as a careful student of the latest medical and surgical discoveries. Dr. F. F. Backus, beginning to advance in years, reported in 1849 on the 712 births he had assisted during the previous seventeen years and, recalling an experiment with the use of ether many years before, greeted the new methods for the safe use of anesthetics with praise.<sup>112</sup>

Though not as contentious as the city's eighty-four lawyers ("Every lawyer seemed to be a judge," one observer reported, and hustled about with "an air of defiance on his brow"),<sup>113</sup> the doctors could not always agree. Those trained in the standard medical colleges, and therefore entitled to display an M.D., were bitterly attacked by Dr. Justin Gates, the local exponent of the Thompsonian or Botanic system. The average M.D. killed twenty patients by bleeding and poisons before he learned caution, Gates declared, while the followers of Thompson used only vegetable remedies. Although the *Rochester Medical Truth Teller and Monthly Family Journal of Health*, issued by Gates in 1844, soon disappeared, the science of homeopathy enjoyed wide confidence for a time, and the followers of the eclectic school, a new protest against traditional medicine, established the Central Medical College at Rochester.<sup>114</sup> Each of these groups had something to contribute, but much to learn, and the same held true of Woodland Owen's *Guide to the Preservation of the Teeth*, in which the use of a small brush with bristles in three rows, tooth powder, and elbow grease was recommended.<sup>115</sup>

Each year brought its additional conveniences for those who could

<sup>111</sup> E. Scrantom, Diary, June 15, 1837; Schermerhorn Letters, Nos. 55, 60.

<sup>112</sup> Betsy C. Corner, "A Century of Medicine in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 342-352; "Dr. William W. Reid," in Howard A. Kelly and Walter L. Burrage, *Dictionary of Amer. Medical Biography* (New York, 1928), p. 1026; "Dr. Edward Mott Moore," *D. A. B.*, XIII, 119-120.

<sup>113</sup> Mrs. [M. C. F.] Houston, *Hesperos: Or Travels in the West* (London, 1850), I, 104.

<sup>114</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Aug. 1, 18, 1846, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Betsy C. Corner, "Rochester's Early Medical School," R. H. S., *Pub.*, VII, 141-152.

<sup>115</sup> W. Owen, *A Guide to the Preservation of the Teeth* (Rochester, 1842); H. J. Burkhart, "Centennial History of Dentistry in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 285-288, 294.

afford them. Private carriages increased in number, as the growing size of the city sent new customers to the Cunningham factory, where an elegant carriage could be had for \$350 in cash, with possibly a small allowance on an old rig. Additional rooms were frequently added or a spacious veranda in the rear where the children could safely play in winter. English girls, much in demand as companions for a brood of young children, could usually be found if a family agreed to keep one from ten until eighteen.<sup>116</sup> Ornamental trees and box hedging, as well as fruit trees and flowers, were becoming essential outdoor accessories, while a visit to one of the local nurseries provided an agreeable spring-time chore. Sanitary wooden pumps replaced the open buckets in backyard-wells, and improved sewers decreased the cistern problem, but the outdoor necessary remained, supplemented perhaps by the chamber maid. Though washing machines appeared as the latest novelty in 1843, that distinction went a few years later to Bates' Patent Chamber Shower Bath. It was no longer necessary, the advertiser declared, to bathe in a washtub in the kitchen, for the new shower bath could be set up in a bedroom or parlor; already the patrons of Blossom's Hotel enjoyed this convenience.<sup>117</sup>

The standard of domestic comfort fell sharply with the arrival of cold weather. The better homes, which had formerly boasted a fireplace in each downstairs room, were in some cases bricking them shut, as the new parlor stoves, or more rarely a hot-air furnace in the cellar proved sufficient, though many clung to the traditional "blazing hearth," despite the scorn of stove advertisements. With the price of wood rising from two to five dollars a cord, closing the fireplaces, which consumed as much as ten cords each during the winter, promised relief at the chopping block, yet coal for the furnace proved no less expensive, costing five dollars a ton in the late forties.<sup>118</sup> It was much simpler, J. M. Schermerhorn decided, to take a suite at the Temperance House, where all of these problems were solved for you, although that arrangement had its disadvantages, as he discovered when the "Band of Music in the Ball Room" continued until a late hour and with other distractions delayed his retirement until eleven and sometimes even till midnight.<sup>119</sup>

Most Rochesterians enjoyed few of these conveniences. The attractive appearance of Rochester, described on one occasion as the "handsomest

<sup>116</sup> Mrs. Silas H. Smith to Mrs. Freeman Clarke, Rochester, Mar. 29, 1837, Clarke MSS, courtesy of Mrs. Buell Mills, Rochester; Schermerhorn Letters, June 7, 1843.

<sup>117</sup> J. T. Andrews, *Weather Book*, *passim*; *New Genesee Farmer*, May, 1840, p. 69; *Democrat*, Sept. 20, 1843; *Genesee Farmer*, June, 1848, p. 161; *Advertiser*, Mar. 26, 1846.

<sup>118</sup> *New Genesee Farmer*, October, 1840, p. 145; November, 1842, p. 173; Andrews *Weather Book*, March, 1848.

<sup>119</sup> Schermerhorn Letters, Nov. 30, Dec. 21, 1842; Jan. 17, 1843.

city in the Union, with two exceptions, New Haven and Richmond,"<sup>120</sup> caused many to overlook its less seemly features. A small Negro quarter was developing west of High Street, scarcely a stone's throw from the elegant homes of the Third Ward where many of these folk found employment.<sup>121</sup> Scattered old rookeries, rambling structures hastily thrown up during boom years to house the increasing number of poor folk, stood scattered about, neglected until the number of cholera fatalities in 1848 exposed their wretched conditions.<sup>122</sup> Some of the worst of these tenements were being cleared away, generally by fire, as in the case of the so-called Dublin Castle in which seventy-five poor Irish families had been crowded,<sup>123</sup> but the cheap two- or three-room cottages on the outskirts, into which the poor were moving, while made attractive enough on the outside by coats of white or yellow paint and vegetable or flower gardens, provided meager quarters for the large families of the day. One observer described many of the new houses erected in 1842 as "noble structures of 16 feet square."<sup>124</sup> Frequently lacking a cellar or cistern and poorly plastered if at all, their advantages over the log cabins of the past proved few indeed.<sup>125</sup> A Franklin stove might provide more heat than the drafty fireplaces, and a lard lamp better light than the traditional candle,<sup>126</sup> but no doubt it afforded great consolation to be able to elect a president said to have been reared under less favorable circumstances.

The contrasts between the three hundred pretentious residences and the six thousand less substantial houses were possibly more striking than other differences in domestic standards. One traveler found that "provisions at Rochester are as good and plentiful as in any city in the Union—New York not excepted," while others commented on the abundance of meats, fruit, and vegetables available in season.<sup>127</sup> The bountiful breakfasts of pioneer days had given way to a lighter fare, with hot cornbread as the staple, but other meals lost none of their weight. Even on a fast day, J. T. Andrews noted that his housekeeper served potatoes, fish, beefsteak, liver, bread and butter, pickles, pie and cake. The favor shown by continental immigrants for fruit and vegetables appeared a community hazard during the cholera epidemic, yet the product of the many backyard gardens remained of large importance to most families. A series of lectures by Sylvester Graham stimulated a

<sup>120</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 134.

<sup>121</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 27, 1834; N. Y. *Census* (1845), plate 27, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 173, 228-229.

<sup>123</sup> Samson Scrapbook, No. 41, p. 63.

<sup>124</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 15, 1842.

<sup>125</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, Feb. 11, 28, 29, 1840.

<sup>126</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, October, 1849; May, 1850.

<sup>127</sup> Houston, *Hesperos*, I, 108; *New Genesee Farmer*, August, September, October, 1842, pp. 120, 136, 148. See also Martin, *Standard of Living*, pp. 11-82.

new interest in dietary matters, while the development of a commercial ice industry made possible an advance in health standards, though the effect on the average household was probably slight.<sup>128</sup>

The tables maintained by the leading hotels were popular among residents and travelers alike. Grace Greenwood, who "love[d] to visit Rochester," though the absence of "old familiar faces" of her school days proved depressing, stopped frequently at the Eagle Hotel, which she described as a "home-like sort of a place" with a good table. Schermerhorn found the fare at the Temperance House a bit too fine for his taste.<sup>129</sup> Banqueting out generally provided the high point of any and all celebrations, whether on Independence Day, the visit of a celebrity, or the printers' annual commemoration of Franklin's birthday. A wide selection of a half-dozen roasts, an equal number of boiled or broiled meats, oysters and fish in varied forms, a dozen pastries and other desserts topped off with fruit enabled local printers to give due honor to the "First American" in 1847. A year later the pioneer settlers of Rochester, gathering to relive the scenes of the past, were not satisfied until a selection of vegetables was added to the printers' menu.<sup>130</sup>



But "the principal charm of Rochester," said Alexander Mackay, after describing the beauty of its gorge and the remarkable energy of its commerce and industry, "is in its social circle, which is intellectual, highly cultivated, hospitable, frank and warm hearted."<sup>131</sup> Horace Greeley declared that "Rochester is the most republican city of our State—the least pampered by distinctions of class or prejudices of sect."<sup>132</sup> Another observer noted "less show of expensive equipage and foolish style of living in Rochester than in any other place of the size within my knowledge." On further inquiry he learned that "the aristocracy, or the scrub nobility, were very limited," and that "the mechanics and small tradesmen are . . . the moving spirits of the city."<sup>133</sup>

Rochester's social elite still functioned much as an enlarged family circle, with its hospitality checked only by the facilities of the largest mansions. The young folk kept a succession of gay parties running through each January and February in the numerous big houses, and

<sup>128</sup> *Advertiser*, Sept. 15, 1849; Andrews Weather Book, April, 1847; E. Scrantom, Diary, Jan. 3, 1840; Samson Scrapbook, No. 51, p. 27. Ice was generally regarded as a household luxury prior to 1850, but found increased use in the brewing industry.

<sup>129</sup> Grace Greenwood, letter of Aug. 1, 1849, Raymond Scrapbook, p. 132; Schermerhorn Letters, Nov. 30, 1842.

<sup>130</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 30, 71; *Democrat*, Dec. 3, 1840.

<sup>131</sup> Mackay, *The Western World*, III, 113.

<sup>132</sup> *N. Y. Tribune* (1849), Raymond Scrapbook, p. 137.

<sup>133</sup> "Opinions of Rochester: 1848," *Syracuse Star* clipping, no date, Raymond Scrapbook, p. 56.



no doubt the lists of guests if combined would have supplied a tentative social register. The old custom of gathering at four in the afternoon was giving way to the evening party which sometimes continued until midnight, but the guests still attended as family delegations rather than in couples.<sup>134</sup> If a promising young clerk, such as Cyrus F. Paine, earning four hundred dollars a year, wished to court his boss's daughter, he might escort her to midweek prayer service without offense, or they might join the family in an apple-paring match or in a song fest around the piano in the sitting room. On one occasion Cyrus confided to his journal that he had "sat with H. in the *parlor*."<sup>135</sup> Young Paine was benefiting from the recently adopted seven o'clock closing hour. Although agitation for this practice had started in 1841, when a Clerk's Association argued that "that hour [9 P.M.] is altogether too late to afford us the means to enter into the society of those whose restraining influence would at once refine our manners and purify our hearts," yet it was December, 1848, before the reform was achieved, and then only for the winter months.<sup>136</sup>

Less circumspect perhaps, but more full of zest, were the midwinter balls of the military units and volunteer fire companies. Indeed these festive occasions, usually held at the Eagle Hotel and sometimes numbering as many as thirty dances, easily overshadowed the more exclusive mansion parties.<sup>137</sup> Third Ward daughters might be kept at home, but it proved difficult to restrict the freedom of the young men. More than one city father was finding the control of his sons a serious problem—one which a year at sea or in a distant academy did not solve. Mothers could not always choose their daughters-in-law, and at least one parent, a respected deacon of a leading church, was held blameworthy by a close friend for not following "the Word of God's Truth" and applying the rod when necessary.<sup>138</sup>

The younger members of some of the leading families made one dramatic effort in January, 1847, to reestablish their social ascendancy by a costume party at the home of Mrs. William H. Greenough, where the elite gathered to the number of seventy-six. The gala affair prompted two young and dashing newcomers in Rochester, Leonard and Lawrence Jerome, to bring out an amusing account in prose and verse of *The Fancy Party* in which the costumes and the personalities were generously puffed up. But the "unsoaped" had their spokesman as well when a second pamphlet followed with a satirical account of *The Great Upper-*

<sup>134</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Aug. 2, 1839, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Andrews Weather Book, January–February, 1846; January–February, 1847.

<sup>135</sup> Cyrus F. Paine, Journal, MS in Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>136</sup> *Advertiser*, Oct. 1, 1841, Nov. 30, 1848.

<sup>137</sup> Miscellaneous Programs and Invitations, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>138</sup> Schermerhorn Letters, Dec. 21, 1842.

*crust Party*. Illustrated with a series of grotesque woodcuts, the second and more facetious account burlesqued the show, demonstrating that Rochester had developed a lusty sense of humor and was fully able to put its "scrub nobility" in its place.<sup>139</sup>

Indeed, social activities were becoming more numerous and more animated as the years advanced. Thanksgiving remained a family day, but New Year's Eve celebrations expanded into community affairs, with scores of friends marching the rounds together, visiting the homes where candle displays assured a cheery welcome. The liberal supply of "champaigne" served at several houses in 1841 prompted the organization of a temperance party at a local hotel the next New Year's Eve, with the invitation, extended to the public generally, signed by "Santa Claus," who described himself as "the universal friend of children."<sup>140</sup> Christmas remained a quiet religious day, highlighted by a sermon and a family feast. St. Nicholas was already filling the stockings of good children, and the appearance of Rochester's first Christmas tree in 1840, erected in front of the newly established Lutheran Church by a small group of Germans, provided a sparkling omen of a new trend.<sup>141</sup> Andrews Street hill continued to attract young coasters, some sporting new store sleds, while skating on the ice within the sheltered trough of the aqueduct became popular during the late thirties. The jolly sleigh rides of earlier days increased in number, until in 1843 as many as fifteen hundred sleighs were counted in the city during a single day.<sup>142</sup>

Summer months offered new attractions as well. Citizen committees prepared weeks in advance for the proper celebration of each successive Fourth, now a joyous holiday, rich with democratic ceremony. Visiting military or fire companies eagerly joined the ever-extending ranks of the paraders, and although efforts to curb the use of firecrackers and to reduce the consumption of liquor generally proved futile, the city was fortunately spared the more serious accidents of neighboring celebrations.<sup>143</sup> The arrival of volunteer firemen from Cobourg across the lake prompted the first torchlight procession in 1848, the same year that

<sup>139</sup> *The Fancy Party* (Rochester, 1847); *The Great Upper-Crust Party* (Irondequoit, 1847); Arthur C. Parker, "The Funny-Bone of Early Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XI, 135-139.

<sup>140</sup> *The Penny Preacher*, Dec. 13, 1842; Union Grays' Record Book, Jan. 1, 1841, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>141</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Dec. 25, 1839, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; *Advertiser*, Dec. 29, 1840; George Ellwanger's Scrapbook.

<sup>142</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Nov. 28, 1839, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Andrews Weather Book, Dec. 25, 1847; Schermerhorn Letters, Dec. 21, 1842; Rossiter Johnson, "The Grandest Playground in the World," *R. H. S., Pub.*, VII, 77; "Reminiscences of J. L. H. Mosier," *Union and Advertiser*, Feb. 12, 1884.

<sup>143</sup> *Democrat*, July 6, 1839; July 6, 8, 1842; *Advertiser*, June 15, 20, 1840; July 5, 10, 1845; E. Scrantom, Diary, July 4, 1837.

another colorful parade demonstrated local sympathy for the French revolution.<sup>144</sup> At least forty-one visits by traveling circuses occurred during the period, one of them in 1846 displaying eighty-two horsemen, two elephants, and numerous other animals. The famous clown, Dan Rice, made his first appearance that year, and the following season, when P. T. Barnum arrived to arrange a fitting reception for General Tom Thumb, a local editor, observing that dollars rather than dimes were being carted away, declared that Rochester had gone "circus-mad." But the city had as yet seen nothing to compare with the caravan of elephants and camels that tramped through its streets in 1850.<sup>145</sup> Perhaps the most sensational event of the period was the balloon ascension, staged by Lewis A. Lauriat, widely advertised to take off from State Street on September 8, 1836. Though the initial attempt ended in failure, almost in riot, when the disappointed crowd was thrown into confusion by the collapse of the grandstand, Lauriat redeemed himself a few days later; yet another decade passed before Rochester again witnessed a balloon ascension.<sup>146</sup>

Organized sports did not begin to appear until near the mid-century, but outdoor amusements were meanwhile developing. The aldermen of 1836 considered it necessary to ban kite-flying, shooting, and swimming within the city limits, and a decade later added ball-throwing to the list.<sup>147</sup> As there were no restraints on fishing, Edwin Scrantom took his wife and son for an outing on Irondequoit Bay during which they caught "forty fine fish."<sup>148</sup> When in 1849 a Sportsman's Club formed, 624 pigeons rewarded one day's hunt in the newly prescribed hunting season.<sup>149</sup> Two cricket clubs, organized in 1847, staged occasional games,<sup>150</sup> and much popular interest attended a horse race on the ice at Kelsey's landing in January, 1846, but local track fans had to resort to Buffalo for their sport until 1849, when annual three-day trotting matches with sulkies, climaxed by a race between the two local favorites, Jack Rossiter and St. Lawrence, for purses ranging from \$100 to \$500, attracted crowds of more than two thousand to the Carthage track, renamed the Rochester Union Course in 1850.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 63, 79, 173; *Democrat*, May 5, 9, 1848.

<sup>145</sup> *Democrat*, July 15, 1833; Sept. 8, 1846; June 22, Aug. 6, 1847; *Genesee Oil*, June 16, 1847; May 3, 1849; Andrews Weather Book, July 1, 1846; May, July, 1850.

<sup>146</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Sept. 6, 13, 27, 1836; Aug. 17, 1847; *Democrat*, July 1, Aug. 13, 1845; Dorothy S. Truesdale, "Mr. Lauriat and His Balloon," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XVIII, 203-205.

<sup>147</sup> *Ordinances* (1836), pp. 16-17; (1848), p. 45.

<sup>148</sup> E. Scrantom, *Diary*, June 18, 1838.

<sup>149</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Dec. 27, 1849; *Democrat*, Mar. 27, 1841; Nov. 21, 1849.

<sup>150</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 28, 1847.

<sup>151</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 12, 1846; Aug. 18, 1847; Dec. 3, 1849; May 10, Oct. 21, 24, 1850.

Driving was a favorite relaxation for those able to afford a carriage, while horseback riding supplied exercise to young and old alike. A visit to the docks, the mouth of the river, a neighboring village, or a distant friend's home provided agreeable outings.<sup>152</sup> More extended trips were eagerly welcomed when business or poor health supplied an excuse. One was sure to encounter numerous Rochesterians in New York City, Schermerhorn discovered, while O'Reilly had the same experience in New Orleans. Levi W. Sibley, Edwin Scrantom's partner, wrote from Georgia, another from Texas, and several from both Florida and California, reporting varied experiences. European travel was becoming more frequent, and one favored resident of the Rochester area enjoyed a visit to the Holy Land.<sup>153</sup>

Though extensive travel remained beyond the means of most Rochesterians, agreeable substitutes were at hand. An excursion on the small steamer, *Paul Pry*, from Carthage around into Irondequoit Bay, a cruise on the lake, or a ride on the steam cars might prove exciting,<sup>154</sup> while a leisurely stroll on Falls Field to view the main falls, to marvel at the number and size of the mills with which man had surrounded its foaming torrent, and perhaps to enjoy a drink at one of the provision stands located there in fair seasons, provided relaxation on the Sabbath or other holidays. The old Museum on Exchange Street, now displaying at the door two monster oyster shells brought from the South Pacific, continued to attract the curious.<sup>155</sup>

Promenading along Main and Buffalo or State and Exchange streets, where a few plate glass store fronts began to appear at the mid-century, afforded ladies the new joys of window shopping. A local editor warned that these streets would never rival Broadway in fashion as long as some merchants encumbered the walks with empty boxes or hung their awnings so low that a five-foot lady could not pass under them upright. When, however, the stores and factories closed, "between sundown and nine in the evening, Main Street, from State to the east side of the river," declared one observer, "presents a fair and full miniature of Broadway in New York by the throng of people passing to and fro. So

<sup>152</sup> Elisabeth S. S. Eaton to her husband, Rochester, Aug. 18, 31, 1846, E. S. S. Eaton Letters; Andrews Weather Books, *passim*; *New Genesee Farmer*, February, 1840, p. 25; "Mineral Springs of Monroe County," Assembly Doc. (1838), No. 200.

<sup>153</sup> E. S. S. Eaton Letters, 1837-1841; Schermerhorn Letters, July 1, 1841, Aug. 23, 1842; O'Reilly Letters, New Orleans, Feb. 13, 1835, L. W. Sibley to Henry O'Reilly, Savannah, Dec., 1841, K. H. Van Rensselaer to O'Reilly, San Antonio, Texas, 1839, O'Reilly Doc.; David Millard, *A Journal of Travels in Egypt . . . and the Holy Land* (Rochester, 1843).

<sup>154</sup> *Volunteer*, June 19, 1841; *Roch. Republican*, Aug. 4, 1846; D. S. Curtis to O'Reilly, Buffalo, Apr. 1, 1842, O'Reilly Doc.

<sup>155</sup> Houston, *Hesperos*, I, 110; "Reminiscences of Mosier," *Union and Advertiser*, Feb. 12, 1884.

dense is the crowd that one is compelled to elbow his way along."<sup>156</sup>

A variety of social organizations added another feature to the life of the city. Though Masonic lodges did not reappear in Rochester until the late forties, several societies of Odd Fellows were meanwhile formed, despite considerable hostility. Numerous religious, humanitarian, and trade organizations provided outlets for social energies;<sup>157</sup> yet perhaps the most colorful activity was that of the various military units. Five well-organized companies of citizen soldiers emerged during the period from earlier bodies: the Rochester Union Grays, the Williams Light Infantry, the Irish Volunteers, the German Grenadiers, and the City Cadets. In addition to their frequent drills, dress parades, temporary encampments, and excursions to distant military reviews, an armory maintained in the Market Building attracted a stream of curious visitors for many years.<sup>158</sup> The Mexican War enlisted the volunteer service of several score of these militiamen. The fortunes of seventy-odd Rochesterians under Captain Caleb Wilder, who ultimately crossed the Rio Grande, suffering a few casualties, helped to counteract local opposition to the war.<sup>159</sup> A public demonstration, celebrating a series of American victories, attracted several thousand citizens to the court house square on one occasion. Yet the Mexican War failed to stir the interest previously aroused in Rochester by the so-called Patriot's War across the Canadian border.<sup>160</sup>

Foreign-born citizens were becoming sufficiently numerous to support benevolent as well as church and military societies. Scottish residents early established a local branch of the St. Andrew Society and assembled several score of their countrymen at each yearly banquet,<sup>161</sup> while the annual St. Patrick's Day celebration of the Irish became a colorful event in the life of the city. The Repealers, or the Friends of Ireland, organized locally in 1841, held enthusiastic meetings at which small sums were gathered in the early forties for the cause of Irish independence. When the potato famine of the mid-forties turned popular attention to the more urgent need for relief, a fund of \$2,647.06 was raised in May, 1847,

<sup>156</sup> *Genesee Olio*, Sept. 23, 1848; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 56; Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America* (New York, 1853), p. 581.

<sup>157</sup> *Democrat*, June 20, 1849; *Advertiser*, Oct. 7, 1841; June 24, 1848; Sept. 5, 1850; *Directory* (1847), pp. 9-26; Thomas Gliddon, *History of Hamilton Chapter, No. 63, Royal Arch Masons* (Rochester, 1879), pp. 25-30.

<sup>158</sup> Union Grays, Register of Visitors to the Armory, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Wheeler C. Case, "Rochester's Citizen Soldiers," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 238-257.

<sup>159</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Feb. 23, Apr. 20, May 4, June 29, July 6, 13, 1847; *Democrat*, Feb. 25, May 4, 1847; Aug. 25, 1848; *Advertiser*, July 18, Aug. 2, 1848.

<sup>160</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Dec. 19, 26, 1837; Jan. 2, 9, 16, 23, Apr. 24, June 5, July 10, 1838.

<sup>161</sup> *Anti-Masonic Inquirer*, Dec. 13, 1831; *Democrat*, Feb. 13, 1844; Dec. 2, 1850.

for that purpose.<sup>162</sup> By the late forties local German societies likewise appeared, giving expression to gymnastic, musical, and other native interests. Though the first performance of the German band in 1848 did not attract universal favor, the opening of a "Turn Verein" hall that fall provided a center for the cultural development of this important immigrant group.<sup>163</sup>



With a widening horizon and an increasingly urban character many of Rochester's earlier restraints were relaxed, giving fuller scope to the rising common man. Albert G. Hall warned his flock at Third Church against the dangers of the theater, the novel, mixed dancing, and the modern styles of women's dress—but to little avail.<sup>164</sup> Though amusements associated with gambling remained illegal throughout the period, their suppression became increasingly difficult. A public meeting to protest the ordinances proscribing billiard tables and ninepin alleys incited larger gatherings by those supporting the regulation, yet the overseer of the poor received a steady revenue in the fines collected from gambling houses.<sup>165</sup>

As further evidence of increased urbanity, patrons of the drama finally achieved the establishment of a permanent theater by the end of the period. The long gap between visits from theatrical troupes, following the brief visit in 1830 of the youthful Louisa Lane,<sup>166</sup> ended in 1835 when the Charleston Players secured a license from the briefly victorious Democrats.<sup>167</sup> That and another brief engagement were followed by a four-week dramatic season in 1837 when a troupe from Buffalo endeavored to establish a branch theater in Rochester. But, despite much Shakespeare and some local color, the attempt failed, and O'Reilly was compelled to report one theater converted into a livery stable and the circus building closed.<sup>168</sup> A new and more promising venture appeared in 1840, when Edwin Dean, manager of the Eagle Street Theater in Buffalo, leased and remodelled Concert Hall on Exchange Street, opening with a talented company. His wife and daughter, Julia, destined to win wide approval a few years later,

<sup>162</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Mar. 22, 1842; June 1, 1847; *Democrat*, Mar. 20, 1843; Feb. 15, 1847; *Advertiser*, Aug. 14, 1847; O'Reilly Doc., No. 1727.

<sup>163</sup> *Genesee Olio*, Sept. 23, Oct. 7, 1848; Peck, *History of Rochester*, pp. 481-496.

<sup>164</sup> Rev. A. G. Hall, *A Sermon on the Seventh Commandment* (Rochester, 1841).

<sup>165</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 20, 25, Mar. 10, 1843; Jan. 1, May 21, 23, 1845; "Report of the Committee on Grievances," no date, probably 1839, MS, Hist. Soc. Roch.

<sup>166</sup> *Advertiser*, Sept. 9, 1830.

<sup>167</sup> *Democrat*, July 11, 16, Aug. 1, 1835.

<sup>168</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 9, 1835; Mar. 2, 14, 21, 1837; O'Reilly, *Sketches of Rochester*, p. 317.

J. B. Rice, soon to become influential as a theater manager in Chicago, and Mrs. Rice, daughter of William Warren, the talented comedian of the Boston Museum, comprised the leading stock characters, supporting such visiting actors as Edwin Forrest, Joseph Parker, and Mrs. McClure, who ultimately remarried in Rochester and made the city her home. A wide selection of plays included Shakespearean dramas, many light farces, spectacles such as "Cherry and Fair Star," and numerous melodramas as "Nick in the Woods," as well as the oft-repeated "Forty Thieves" and "Children of Cypress." A special performance entitled "Sam Patch in France," written and played by the popular Dan Marble, made amusing use of a locally famous character.<sup>169</sup>

Despite its auspicious beginning and creditable offerings, the Dean Theater soon encountered difficulties. The return visits of the revivalist, Charles Finney, in the early forties strengthened the ardor of the theater's opponents. Even the *Workingman's Advocate*, which had afforded generous advertising space for a time, became more critical. With the demise of that paper the theater was forced to rely largely upon bills posted conspicuously on the bridge. For two or three years interested Rochesterians shared with devotees of the theater in Buffalo the occasional services of the struggling company, but the death of his wife and the desire to give Julia a wider range of audiences, coupled with local hostility, finally prompted Dean to close the theater in 1842 or 1843.<sup>170</sup>

Yet the city continued to enjoy a varied assortment of entertainments. Not only was Concert Hall frequently in use, but Irving Hall in Smith's Arcade and the ballrooms of the Morton House and other hotels provided accommodations for temperance plays, moral exhibitions of "Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Reformed Drunkard" among other subjects designed to cultivate pious tastes, concerts by local and visiting choral societies, and public lectures. The balcony of the Eagle Hotel afforded a convenient concert stand for the Adams Band or one of its three rivals of the late forties. The happy combination of band music and ice cream was discovered at church festivals as well as at the City Gardens located in the northwest outskirts and Palmer's Garden on the east side, where a fireworks exhibit or other entertainment generally supplied additional amusement.<sup>171</sup>

The Academy of Sacred Music, organized in 1835, the Mechanics

<sup>169</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, Jan. 13, 17, Feb. 18, 26, Mar. 7, 31, 1840; *Advertiser*, Nov. 27, Dec. 22, 1841; Nellie E. Bitz, "A Half-Century of Theater in Early Rochester," M. A. thesis, Univ. of Syracuse, pp. 63-76, 159-160.

<sup>170</sup> Bitz, pp. 70, 77-85; *Roch. Republican*, July 19, 1842; *Advertiser*, Dec. 22, 1841; Jan. 15, Aug. 5, 9, 1842; George M. Elwood, "Some Early Public Amusements in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, I, 28-31; "Julia Dean," *D. A. B.*, V, 170.

<sup>171</sup> *Democrat*, July 1, 1842; June 19, 1843; May 30, 1844; June 28, 1845; *Advertiser*, May 30, 1849.

Musical Association, started two years later, the Harmonic, and other choral societies maintained active programs under the direction of successive church organists, notably Robert Barron, who arrived from Boston in the early forties.<sup>172</sup> Perhaps the first distinctly Continental influence was that brought by the Rainer family, which paid a first visit in the spring of 1840, returning in the fall two years later, and introduced jodels, Tirolese dancing, and other German arts to Rochester audiences.<sup>173</sup>

A new impetus was given to local music developments in 1843 when Mason and Webb of the Boston Academy of Music conducted a series of classes at the First Church. At the close of the twelve-day course, local teachers of vocal music and choir members in attendance voted for the return of their Eastern mentors a year later, thus forging a vital cultural link between the Flour City and Boston, the music capital of the day. The Rochester Music Festivals, the first organized outside Boston, were repeated annually for many years, remaining under the tutelage of Mason and Webb until the mid-century, and it was through this channel that English and German influences were received.<sup>174</sup> Another contact with Europe was provided, moreover, when Henry Russell, the English-born ballad singer, resident in Rochester in the mid-thirties, journeyed eastward and abroad, for the reports of his achievements brought joy to local music lovers.<sup>175</sup> Local talent gained wider recognition as Miss Marion McGreggor's reputation spread.<sup>176</sup> Distinguished visiting performers of the period included Ole Bull, the violinist, the Hutchinson Family, the Swiss Bell-Ringers, "Christy's far-famed band of Ethiopian Minstrels," and the juvenile prodigy, Theodore Thomas.<sup>177</sup>

The welcome accorded these musical artists prompted a rapid expansion of the city's entertainment facilities. Minerva Hall opened on the east side in 1845, and the old theater or concert hall reopened the next year as the Dramatic Saloon.<sup>178</sup> Though the latter venture proved

<sup>172</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 7, 1836, Aug. 18, Sept. 6, 1842; Jan. 26, 1843; July 9, 1844; May 29, 1845; *Roch. Republican*, May 15, 1838; July 27, 1841; Nov. 3, 1846.

<sup>173</sup> *Democrat*, May 29, 1840; Aug. 26, 1842.

<sup>174</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 7, 1843; Aug. 23, 1844; Sept. 8, 1845; Sept. 22, 1848; I am obliged to Dr. Rolf King of the University of Rochester for access to an unpublished article studying the German influences on music in Rochester during this period. See also John T. Howard, *Our American Music* (New York, c. 1930), pp. 146-147.

<sup>175</sup> "Henry Russell," *Nat. Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, V, 249.

<sup>176</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 11, 1842. A visitor from Boston said of Miss McGreggor, "The citizens of Rochester may well be proud of her as I assure them they would not find her equal between their city and ours."

<sup>177</sup> R. H. Lansing, "Music in Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, II, 137-143; *Advertiser*, June 18, 1844; "Ole Bull," *Nat. Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, IV, 234; "Hutchinson Family," X, 26-27; Rolf King, "Theodore Thomas' First Visit to Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XVIII, 211-215.

<sup>178</sup> *Advertiser*, Oct. 29, 1846; Sept. 29, 1847; Sept. 27-30, 1848; Bitz, pp. 90-98.



unsuccessful, a new effort at the close of 1848 finally established a permanent theater in the Enos Stone Building on the site later occupied by Cook's Opera House on South Avenue. With the hall decorated by Colby Kimball and lighted by seventy-five gas burners supplied by the recently established gas company, accommodations for one thousand were advertised. The theatrical company of Thomas Carr and Henry Warren, whose support was shared by Buffalo, journeyed back and forth between the two cities, while Eastern stars stopped over occasionally for brief seasons during theatrical tours, among them Julia Dean, now enjoying a national reputation.<sup>179</sup> Meanwhile, the opening of a new Concert Hall on State Street, the provision of a Turner hall for the German societies, and finally in 1849 the construction of the large and imposing Corinthian Hall by William Reynolds supplied Rochester with ample facilities for cultural improvement and entertainment.<sup>180</sup>

Rochesterians greeted with special favor the occasional arrival of portrait painters. Grove S. Gilbert, who made his home in the city after 1834, was "the artist of Rochester," as Grace Greenwood (and many another observer) declared, regretting that he should squander his talent on portraits. Some forty Rochester families cherished his sympathetic portrayals of favored relations,<sup>181</sup> and much was added to the dignity and elegance of numerous Rochester mansions by the impressive oil portraits by Gilbert, Colby Kimball, Alva Bradish, and Thomas LeClear among several others.<sup>182</sup> Those who could not afford such a luxury were accommodated after 1841 by visiting daguerreotype artists. Eugene Sintzenich, who conducted such a studio in the forties, was brought to the city in 1839 by Abelard Reynolds to decorate the walls at the entrance of the Arcade with murals of Niagara, an operation which attracted an untiring crowd of onlookers.<sup>183</sup> The girls' academies and private students afforded additional support for several of these artists and their numerous associates, who joined in a Rochester Association of Artists in 1843. Murals for the theaters, opened in 1840 and 1848, and interior fresco work for some of the new stores supplied occasional employment, but art remained a very precarious livelihood.<sup>184</sup>

Despite the lack of a suitable gallery, numerous exhibits were successfully held, usually in the accommodating Court House. Colby

<sup>179</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 4, 1848; Feb. 5-16, 1849; *Advertiser*, Dec. 12, 1849; Jan. 10, 1850; Bitz, pp. 99-110.

<sup>180</sup> Elwood, "Some Early Public Amusements," pp. 31-44.

<sup>181</sup> Grace Greenwood, letter of Aug. 1, 1849, Raymond Scrapbook, p. 132. "Paintings of Grove S. Gilbert," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 54-60.

<sup>182</sup> Clifford M. Ulp, "Art and Artists in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 31-33; *Democrat*, Sept. 3, 1840; "Thomas LeClear," *D. A. B.*, XI, 86-87.

<sup>183</sup> *Sun*, June 20, 1839; *Gem*, June 26, 1841.

<sup>184</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 3, 1843; Feb. 17, 1844; *Advertiser*, Feb. 17, 1844. The Association urged the establishment of an academy of art.

Kimball felt it necessary, when displaying his portraits there in 1836, to add a live alligator for attraction, but later exhibits of historical paintings, sacred paintings, miniatures, and European paintings followed without such supports.<sup>185</sup> Works by noted artists of the day were occasionally exhibited at a leading hotel in the course of a tour by the artist or his agent, and some such arrangement brought Benjamin West's "Christ Healing the Sick in the Temple" to Talman's Hall for a brief showing in 1843, while the same artist's "Death on a Pale Horse" provided the subject for a public lecture two years later.<sup>186</sup> Traveling artists, stopping long enough to make a sketch of the aqueduct or the falls, readily displayed samples of their work. At the same time the growing art collections of New York and other cities attracted Rochesterians on their numerous journeys, though J. T. Andrews was disappointed to find that Hiram Powers' "Greek Slave," which he had gone out of his way to see, was such an "improper exhibition." "The human form," he concluded, "looks better dressed than undressed."<sup>187</sup>

No doubt the properly groomed matrons Andrews was accustomed to drive about town eagerly followed the "Latest Paris Fashions" as reported in the *Gem* or one of the other local papers. Straw bonnets with a white ribbon or a curled ostrich feather hanging from the side of the wide brim were in fashion in 1840. Velvet or satin robes decorated with lace distinguished the well-to-do woman from one of modest means who covered her shoulders and back with a shawl fitted to the season. The plain house dress of calico or wool gave place on occasion to a Sunday or party dress with tight sleeves, low and frequently square neck, tight waist, and flounced skirts with an occasional sign of a bustle. Light shades of green or blue were preferred, and the high top shoe colored "ashes of roses" or some other appropriate tint and decorated with numerous buttons marked the respectable lady, though, as the Reverend Hall complained, the trend in fashion was such that a young man could no longer distinguish the virtuous from the vile—all copied the latest Paris or London fashion plate.<sup>188</sup>

#### POLITICAL AND JOURNALISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS

As in the religious and social fields, so likewise in politics and journalism Rochesterians were learning to express themselves more moderately and at the same time with greater success. A vigorous group of printers encouraged the efforts of numerous writers whose effusions, while not

<sup>185</sup> *Democrat*, June 10, 1837; Aug. 27, 1839; Dec. 7, 1843; *Advertiser*, Aug. 5, 1843.

<sup>186</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Apr. 18, 1843; *Advertiser*, Nov. 12, 1844; Sept. 23, 1845; "Benjamin West," *D. A. B.*, XX, 6-9.

<sup>187</sup> Andrews Weather Books, August, 1847.

<sup>188</sup> Rev. A. G. Hall, *Sermon on the Seventh Commandment*; *Democrat*, Oct. 16, 1840; Feb. 6, 1841; *Gem*, June 12, 1841, and *passim*.

displaying literary talent, gave evidence of the city's increased maturity. The history and traditions of the area provided the most congenial subjects, although a close tie to some religious or political objective usually appeared.

National politics, only indirectly related to local problems and aspirations, assumed the character of the favorite American sport. The emotions aroused proved less intense than during the early thirties, but the election returns continued to express popular feelings rather than opinions, while political strategy and fanfare developed apace.

Rochester failed to develop political leadership comparable to that previously supplied by Thurlow Weed. Indeed, that strategist, confident of his hold on Rochester Whigs, was busy cultivating leaders in other areas of the state. Weed's local influence, based on his continued success, found expression through Frederick Whittlesey, his close friend, and George Dawson, his disciple, who served as editor of the *Democrat* from time to time between 1836 and 1846, when Alvah Strong, another Rochester friend of Weed, assumed charge. The repeated defeats suffered by local Jacksonians discouraged successive leaders. Luther Tucker turned to agricultural journalism in 1839; Henry O'Reilly hung on for a time as postmaster but finally followed Tucker to Albany in 1842, where as first editor of the *Atlas* he helped to split the Democrats of New York state. Thomas H. Hyatt, who succeeded to the *Advertiser* and the *Republican* in 1839, struggled along with the aid of a succession of faltering partners until 1845 when Isaac Butts took over. No Rochester man of this period enjoyed state or national prominence in the political field.<sup>189</sup>

The absence of outstanding leaders did not detract from the democratic pageantry which increased with each election. The Hickory clubs, active in the Jackson campaigns, reappeared in 1836 in behalf of Van Buren, but the newly formed Whig party brought together enough Antimasons and old Clintonian and Adams men to poll a small majority in the city.<sup>190</sup> The discouragement of local Democrats was mitigated by the national victory, and their county treasurer, Luther Tucker, reported a balance of \$10.91 out of the campaign fund of \$503.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Professional and economic fields attracted Rochester's ablest men throughout this period. Timothy Childs, despite eight years in Congress, exerted little influence, though Frederick Whittlesey, who served two terms in Congress and eight years as vice-chancellor of the circuit court, left a creditable record, as did several other judges and many of the Rochester editors whose careers took them to Albany, Buffalo, Detroit, or New York in later years. See Peck, *History of Rochester*, pp. 343-379; *Advertiser*, May 1, 1839; Oct. 9, 1845; *Democrat*, Jan. 9, Dec. 8, 1846; O'Reilly Doc., No. 2430; Weed Papers, 1834-1846; "George Dawson," *Nat. Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, II, 204; "Isaac Butts," *D. A. B.*, III, 378-379.

<sup>190</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Oct. 18, 25, Nov. 1, 15, 22, 1836.

<sup>191</sup> The Republican Central Committee to Luther Tucker, Treasurer, 1836, O'Reilly Doc.

Unfortunately the national patronage contained seeds of dissension, soon discovered when the principle of rotation replaced John B. Elwood by O'Reilly as postmaster and Jacob Gould by James Smith as collector of the port.<sup>192</sup>

It was in the election of 1840 that politics gained its most colorful expression. The Democrats, who had temporarily captured the city council in 1837, suffered the odium of the depression and the unpopularity of Van Buren's currency policy. The leaders, divided over the tariff and the Canadian question as well as the bank, were uncertain whether the platform should contain the principle of "the greatest good for the greatest number" or that of "equal rights and individual freedom."<sup>193</sup> The Whigs adroitly side-stepped all of these issues by switching at the last moment from Clay to Harrison, and with the gleeful construction of the city's first Log Cabin early in April, 1840, the local party prepared to ride roughshod over any arguments the opposition could muster.<sup>194</sup>

No other campaign in the city's first half-century engendered the interest aroused in 1840. Tippecanoe clubs appeared in each ward, countering the efforts of Loco Foco clubs. Ward, city, and county rallies followed each other in rapid succession, with appropriate addresses by local leaders. The rival editors, Dawson and Hyatt, vied in heaping invective upon each other. The Whigs staged an impressive parade, with numerous floats from up the valley helping to extend the line of march two miles in length.<sup>195</sup> When finally the polls closed, an unprecedented total of 11,303 votes had been cast in the county, approximately four-fifths of all eligible voters. Again the Whigs proved victorious, though their majority in the city numbered only 317. The Whigs as usual enjoyed a much larger margin in the county, and this time they captured the state and nation as well.<sup>196</sup>

But the Whigs were bitterly disappointed when, after Harrison's early death, Tyler parted company with Clay and Weed. Though O'Reilly was soon replaced by Samuel G. Andrews as postmaster, many local Whigs criticised the latter's political qualifications.<sup>197</sup> There was, however, much rejoicing among all factions of the party when Clay received the nomination in 1844. Clay clubs erected Ash poles to vie with the Hickory poles of the Democrats, and one of the former, standing two hundred feet high in front of the Eagle Hotel, bore its huge flag by day and lantern by night high above all the buildings in town.

<sup>192</sup> *Sun*, June 22, 1839; O'Reilly Doc., Nos. 11, 31e.

<sup>193</sup> O'Reilly Doc., Nos. 1057, 1229, 1581-1585.

<sup>194</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 7, 16, 27, 1840.

<sup>195</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 9, 1840.

<sup>196</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 7, 21, 1840.

<sup>197</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 20, 29, 1842.

Both parties staged conventions and outdoor rallies, though the leaders soon realized that too many speeches might lose the election. Opinions were by no means harmonious in either camp, since both enrolled advocates of protection for infant industries and reciprocity with Canada; both desired a stable currency and more banks. Clay was roundly condemned as a card player by the Democrats, who gleefully employed the criticism, previously leveled at Van Buren, to the discomfiture of the Whigs, prompting some of the latter to swing to Birney and the Liberty party. However, Polk's stand on Texas roused still less support in Rochester, where, despite a sharp drop in the vote, the Whigs again carried each ward, chalking up a city majority of eighty-eight over the combined opposition.<sup>198</sup>

Though the Democrats could rejoice over state and national victories, disharmony appeared when Polk favored a conservative Democrat, Henry Campbell, for local postmaster, spurring the Van Buren faction, known as the Barnburners, to convene a separate caucus. By 1848 the latter, ready to bolt, joined the Free Soil party at Utica and Buffalo conventions.<sup>199</sup> The *Republican* and the *Advertiser*, swinging quickly to the new party, left the regular Democratic ticket poorly supported in the fall campaign. Rough and Ready clubs were organized for General Taylor by his Whig supporters, but enthusiasm waned on all sides, enabling the Whigs to win by a plurality in the smallest total vote of the decade. While a general illumination of all Whig houses in the city marked the celebration, and some five hundred Thanksgiving dinners were distributed to poor families by the Young Whigs, a strange spirit of lassitude was lamented by the *Democrat*.<sup>200</sup>



Politics absorbed a fair portion but by no means all of the energies of Rochester editors. New publications were frequently launched, occasionally with non-political objectives, but as it required more than the income from a few hundred subscribers to put a new paper on its feet, many of these ventures proved ephemeral. The two leading dailies, the *Advertiser* and the *Democrat*, enjoyed rich advertising profits. As each square of sixteen lines or less brought in seventeen dollars a year, an average of nearly five hundred advertisers assured a stable income, enabling the publishers to run the same advertisements in their weekly editions (the *Rochester Republican* and the *Monroe Democrat* respectively)

<sup>198</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 31, Sept. 17, Oct. 18, Nov. 1, 7, 14, 19, 1844; *Advertiser*, Oct. 28, 1844; O'Reilly Doc., No. 1735.

<sup>199</sup> *Democrat*, July 22, 1845, Aug. 12, 1848; *Roch. Republican*, June 15, 22, Sept. 7, Nov. 30, 1848; *Advertiser*, Aug. 8, May 11, 1848. The confused pattern of Democratic politics in New York State at this time is admirably set forth in Stewart Mitchell, *Horatio Seymour* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 46-120.

<sup>200</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 16, 17, 1848; *Advertiser*, Nov. 15, 1848; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 70.

at nominal rates. New weeklies, struggling for a foothold, had to battle this virtual monopoly, and with the exception of the vigorous *Daily American*, only the religious and agricultural papers prospered. Nevertheless, so numerous were the ventures and so successful the leaders that the *Warsaw New Yorker* praised Rochester for having the largest proportion of readers and advertisers among New York state cities in 1847.<sup>201</sup>

The failure of the leading papers to expand their four-page editions provided a strong incentive for new ventures. Occasionally the publishers themselves brought out new papers for special purposes, as when the *Democrat* issued the *Rochester Daily Whig* in 1840 and the *Clay Bugle* in 1844 as campaign sheets. The *Workingman's Advocate*, outgrowth of a printers' strike in 1839, endeavored to follow a non-partisan line, but the Log Cabin campaign of 1840 proved a poor time for impartial journalism, as the *Daily Sun* and the *Evening Express* likewise discovered. The *Workingman's Advocate* (the only paper in the city willing to print theatrical advertisements) struggled along under varied names until, as the *Western New Yorker*, it was purchased and discontinued by the *Democrat* in 1843. The *American*, established in the mid-forties, enjoyed greater success and, under the energetic management of the Jerome brothers and the editor, Alexander Mann, a staunch Clay supporter, soon challenged the *Democrat's* leadership of local Whigs, especially after the departure of Dawson in 1846.<sup>202</sup> Meanwhile, the *Jeffersonian* in 1842 and the *Daily Courier* in 1848, representing two of the numerous factions among the Democrats, were quickly absorbed by the *Advertiser*, though in the latter case the Hunker owners of the *Courier*, among them Samuel L. Selden, took over the *Advertiser* after its brief excursion as a Free Soil paper in 1848.<sup>203</sup>

More than a score of fleeting ventures sprang from one or another reform movement. Five temperance and four antislavery papers appeared briefly, but only Frederick Douglass' *North Star*, started in 1848, enjoyed long life. The *Volunteer* and *Mackenzie's Gazette*, advocates of Canadian annexation; the *Watchman*, published in 1841 by the skeptic, Delazon Smith; the *Voice of Truth* and its Adventist successor, the

<sup>201</sup> Quoted in *Advertiser*, Aug. 5, 1847. See also *Advertiser*, May 24, 1839; Mar. 4, 1848; *Democrat*, Mar. 19, 1840; Paul Benton, "Rochester Journalism," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XI, 108-110, 113-114.

<sup>202</sup> When the postmaster transferred the "list of letters uncalled for at the office" from the *Advertiser* to the *American* in 1848, the editor of the former paper wagered \$100 that the circulation of the *American* was the smallest in the city, but unfortunately the investigation, if ever actually made, was not reported. *Advertiser*, Mar. 4, 1848. For an account of Leonard Jerome, grandfather of Winston Churchill, see Dorothy S. Truesdale, "Leonard W. Jerome," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 205-209.

<sup>203</sup> Peck, *History of Rochester*, pp. 356-358, 363-364.

*Harbinger*; and the *Medical Truth Teller* afforded characteristic expressions of the humanitarian currents of the period.<sup>204</sup>

Meanwhile the *Genesee Farmer* and the *Rochester Gem*, both dating from village days, enjoyed varied fortunes. The *Gem*, though purchased in 1834 by Shepard and Strong of the *Democrat*, remained a non-political purveyor of literary romanticism until its demise in 1843. The *Genesee Olio* of 1847 represented a second and lively but short-lived venture in the same field. Much more constant was the patronage of the *Genesee Farmer*. When in 1839 its owner, Luther Tucker, purchased the *Cultivator* in Albany, proposing to move his *Farmer* there, a *New Genesee Farmer* appeared in Rochester. Backing for the *New Farmer* came from a local seedsman, Michael B. Bateham, and most of its successive editors and proprietors were connected with the seed and nursery business. A *True Genesee Farmer* of 1843 failed to take root, and the *Genesee Farmer* dropped the "New" from its title in 1845 in the midst of one of its many transfers. The late forties found it in the hands of Dr. Daniel Lee, who likewise became editor of the *American*.<sup>205</sup>

Several important innovations marked the publication industry. The increased capacity of the new "cylinder" presses introduced in the mid-forties stimulated output but caused much hardship among the printers—mostly young men who received an average of seven dollars for a week of six ten-hour days—and the efforts of the typographical union failed to improve the situation.<sup>206</sup> While political correspondents appeared for the first time during the campaigns of the forties, local papers could not rival those of the East during tense elections, when as many as two thousand copies of Albany and New York papers were distributed in Rochester. The opening of telegraph connections with Albany in June, 1846, brought the news of the world more quickly to Rochester, enabling each of the dailies to feature "By Telegraph" columns, though opportunities for independent reporting were but slowly developed.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>204</sup> *North Star* [Frederick Douglass' Paper], Apr. 14, 1848; June 13, 1850; Aug. 19, 1853; Aug. 31, 1855; Apr. 25, 1856; Jan. 16, 1857; *Mackenzie's Gazette*, June 22, 1839; Feb. 29, Oct. 31, 1840; *Harbinger*, June 23, 1849–June 15, 1850; June 19, 1852–June 11, 1853; "Delazon Smith," *National Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, XI, 502.

<sup>205</sup> Harriett J. Naylor, "Rochester's Agricultural Press," R. H. S., Pub., XVIII, 182–188. Tucker, Bateham, Moore and several of the other *Farmer* editors were later prominent on scattered agricultural papers in other areas.

<sup>206</sup> Frederick Follett, *History of the Press of Western New York* (Rochester, 1847); *Workingman's Advocate*, Oct. 19, 31, Nov. 1, 1839; *Advertiser*, Sept 18, 1848. Longhand notes by J. W. Benton, a local printer, written on a copy of Follett's pamphlet and dated 1850, tell of Rochester's three cylinder presses, one Adams' improved press, and two job printing presses, all driven by steam, besides twenty hand presses and three card printing machines.

<sup>207</sup> *Advertiser*, June 12, 1846; O'Reilly Doc., No. 803, 1652, 1653; Peck Scrap-book, p. 7.

The increased facilities of local publishers spurred the production of books and pamphlets. A few school texts and books of general interest were republished in Rochester, but religious tracts and other materials of special interest proved more numerous. In addition to thirty-four bound volumes of weekly and monthly papers of magazine size, as many as one hundred and fifty pamphlets numbering from eight to a hundred pages, and thirty-six larger books written or compiled by local authors rolled off Rochester presses during the period. Most numerous among the pamphlets were sermons, while the seven successive city directories issued before the mid-century comprised the largest single category of books.<sup>208</sup>

Of special interest was a group of moral tales and fictional accounts of life in Rochester. The *Story of Sammy, the Sailor Boy* by a "Bethel Man"<sup>209</sup> spun a pious tale designed to call forth the better nature of canal boatmen. The more sinful activities and desperate end of John C. Chumaseo's villains were no doubt intended to point a similar moral, though the vigorous author, a local Democratic judge, tarried so long over the awful crimes in the saloons and brothels and over the sharp practices of fraudulent merchants and greedy landlords that the final triumph of virtue and justice appeared frequently as an afterthought. Chumaseo cast his scenes in Rochester, possibly in an effort to circumvent the popular prejudice against idle fiction, and the same locale served Joseph Boughton, whose brief account of *The Conspiracy, or Triumph of Innocence* resembled in incident if not in vigor the Judge's *Mysteries of Rochester, The Landlord and Tenant*, and *Life in Rochester, or Sketches from Life*.<sup>210</sup>



Most noteworthy of all Rochester's early literary efforts were those which turned back to the history and traditions of the area. Indeed, the city's history provided an intimate community experience. Curious travelers constantly inquired about the town's origin and growth, and every hack driver and tavern keeper had ready answers. After the first *Directory* prodded local recollections to good effect in 1827, the story of Rochester's growth became the city's most persuasive publicity theme. It therefore seemed good for business in 1835 (when the state census provided comparative data) to survey local achievements of the year,

<sup>208</sup> Edward R. Foreman, "Check List of Rochester Publications," R. H. S., *Pub.*, V, 193-222; Douglas C. McMurtrie, *Rochester Imprints: 1819-1850* (Chicago, 1935).

<sup>209</sup> *Story of Sammy, the Sailor Boy* by a Bethel Man (Rochester, 1843).

<sup>210</sup> John C. Chumaseo, *The Mysteries of Rochester* (2nd ed.; Rochester, 1845), *The Landlord and Tenant* (Rochester, 1845), *Life in Rochester, or Sketches from Life* (Rochester, 1848); Joseph Boughton, *The Conspiracy or Triumph of Innocence* (Rochester, 1845).



and editor O'Reilly found his account of "Rochester in 1835," as printed in the *Advertiser* in demand for the rival *Democrat* as well.<sup>211</sup>

When a second annual survey at the end of 1836 met a similar reception, O'Reilly felt encouraged to enlarge his researches in order to produce a full-length history of the city.<sup>212</sup> The size of the project grew as the work advanced, and although generous assistance came from several friends, notably Dr. Chester Dewey who wrote at least one chapter, the burden on his time and energy prompted O'Reilly, full of the impatience of a journalist, hastily to compile his material within the course of a year. Yet, despite limitations in style and integration, the 480-page *Sketches of Rochester, with Incidental Notices of Western New York* proved a worthy achievement. No other interior city could boast such a full account of its growth or such a detailed description of its assets and characteristics.<sup>213</sup> When the local publisher, William Alling, hesitated at the last moment to print the book in Rochester, the manuscript was rushed to New York by sleigh in five days and nights in order to secure the assistance of Harper Brothers.<sup>214</sup> An excellent map and numerous engravings, many of them by Alexander Anderson, father of wood engraving in the United States, made from drawings by J. T. Young of buildings and scenes about the city, added both to the excellence of the book and to its value as a record of Rochester in the late thirties. Favorable notice in a half-dozen eastern papers helped to dispose of the 1500-edition, encouraging O'Reilly to plan a second and enlarged volume.<sup>215</sup>

An outburst of historical reminiscence greeted O'Reilly's book. Old settlers, digging through their trunks, called unsuspected records to his attention. In a new position as postmaster, the erstwhile historian found time to go through James D. Bemis' private file of the *Repository*, started at Canandaigua in 1803, and forthwith decided to broaden the scope of his study to present a full account of the settlement of western New York. Overwhelmed by the opportunities,<sup>216</sup> O'Reilly called scat-

<sup>211</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 18, Nov. 12, 16, 20, 24, 26, 1835; *Democrat*, May 4, 1836.

<sup>212</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 7, 1836; Jan. 4, 1837; *Genesee Farmer*, Sept. 9, 1837.

<sup>213</sup> The one possible exception was Worcester, Massachusetts, many times the age of Rochester and not generally considered an "interior" city. However, William Lincoln's *History of Worcester* (Worcester, 1837), which appeared a year before, while more successful as a chronicle, did not compare with the *Sketches of Rochester* in the range of material included. Indeed, in this respect O'Reilly was decades ahead of such contemporary and much abler historians as Bancroft and Motley.

<sup>214</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 935-946. The imprint reads Rochester: Published by William Alling, 1838.

<sup>215</sup> *Roch. Republican*, May 29, 1838; O'Reilly Doc., No. 2158-2166; Mantle Fielding, *Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers* (Philadelphia, n.d.), p. 8.

<sup>216</sup> The papers of Jesse Hawley, General Chapin, John Greig, Joseph Ellicott, among others, were examined. See also the author's "A History of Historical Writing in the Rochester Area," *Rochester History*, April 1944.

tered friends to his assistance. Orsamus Turner, a fellow Democratic journalist in Lockport, and Frederick Follett, a printer in Batavia, both helped to collect the reminiscences of aging pioneers. But when O'Reilly, deprived of his post office in 1842, removed to Albany in quest of larger journalistic opportunities, these projects were temporarily suspended.<sup>217</sup>

Not so the community's interest in its biographical records. The popularity of the *Life of Mary Jemison, the White Woman of the Genesee* provided a capital example. Four editions of Seaver's book had already appeared elsewhere before two new editions were brought out in Rochester in 1840 and 1841, while O'Reilly's plans for still another edition were frustrated by his removal from the city.<sup>218</sup> The publication by William Alling of the *Narrative of the Christian Experiences, Travels and Labors of John B. Hudson*, a Methodist elder who had served many parts of the Genesee Country, represented another response to the biographical interest.<sup>219</sup>

In 1840 the reorganized Athenaeum and Young Men's Association, of which O'Reilly was then president, staged the first semi-centennial celebration held in the city at the Methodist Chapel in honor of the pioneers on the lower Genesee fifty years before. The main feature of the ceremony proved to be the "Ode in Commemoration of the Settlement of Western New York" by W. H. C. Hosmer of Avon, whose frequent historical poems, notably his "Yonnondio" of 1844, enjoyed a substantial reputation in the area.<sup>220</sup> Before O'Reilly finally laid aside his late Rochester interests, materials for a biography of President James Monroe and a history of Indian affairs attracted his attention, though both projects were soon sidetracked.<sup>221</sup> Local Indian lore likewise absorbed the attention of a brilliant young attorney, Lewis H. Morgan, whose studies of Iroquois customs buttressed his defense of their property rights.<sup>222</sup> A more strictly historical character marked the researches of Orsamus Turner and Frederick Follett, now independent

<sup>217</sup> Orsamus Turner letters to O'Reilly, 1839-1843, and James D. Bemis letters to O'Reilly, 1841-1843, O'Reilly Doc., No. 1286, 1804.

<sup>218</sup> Elmer Adler, "The Persistent Reblossoming of Mary Jemison," R. H. S., Pub., III, 120-123; O'Reilly Doc., No. 1419, 1420.

<sup>219</sup> [J. B. Hudson], *Narrative of the Christian Experiences, Travels and Labors of John B. Hudson* (Rochester, 1838).

<sup>220</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, Mar. 11, 14, 1840; *Advertiser*, Mar. 16, Dec. 24, 1840; Nov. 30, 1844; *Gem*, Oct. 31, 1840; "William H. C. Hosmer," *National Cyc. of Amer. Biog.*, VIII, 200.

<sup>221</sup> O'Reilly Doc., No. 1033, 1024, 2321.

<sup>222</sup> Bernard J. Stern, *Lewis Henry Morgan: Social Evolutionist* (Chicago, 1931), pp. 9-20. Though Stern states that Morgan remained in Aurora until 1850, the appearance of his name in the Rochester *Directories* 1845-46, 1847-48, 1849-50, with a change in street address between the first and second listing, would seem to establish his Rochester residence. See the bibliography of Morgan's writings in Stern, pp. 202-210, for evidence of his activity even during these early years. See also Morgan Letters, MSS, Univ. Rochester.

of O'Reilly's direction, and the latter's *History of the Press of Western New York* provided a valuable record of local pioneer laborers in that field.<sup>223</sup>

The organization of the Pioneer Association of Rochester expressed the newly discovered kinship among old residents. When all who had located at the falls before or during 1818 assembled at the Court House on the afternoon of September 16, 1847, a society was formed, honoring old Hamlet Scrantom, now back in Rochester, as president. At the pioneers' jubilee held two weeks later in Blossom's Hotel, sixty-one aging pioneers gathered around heavily laden tables to share reminiscences of the early days. Several had traveled back from Buffalo and other neighboring places in order to attend, while others had spent a considerable portion of the intervening three decades amid distant scenes, but for most of them Rochester was home. As they recalled the details of its growth from a struggling hamlet into a busy and attractive city, they could not but feel a sense of pride in the achievement.<sup>224</sup>

The Pioneers banqueted again in succeeding years but never with so large a turnout. Though content at first to recall and compare notes among themselves, a more serious concern for the preservation of their records soon appeared. Early Genesee Country pioneers who had located in the city after 1818 petitioned for inclusion, and finally in 1850 the society was renamed the Pioneer Association of Western New York. Many distinguished patriarchs, former leaders of the area, gathered for the jubilee that year, at which Orsamus Turner, now the recognized successor to O'Reilly as historian of western New York, read a paper.<sup>225</sup>

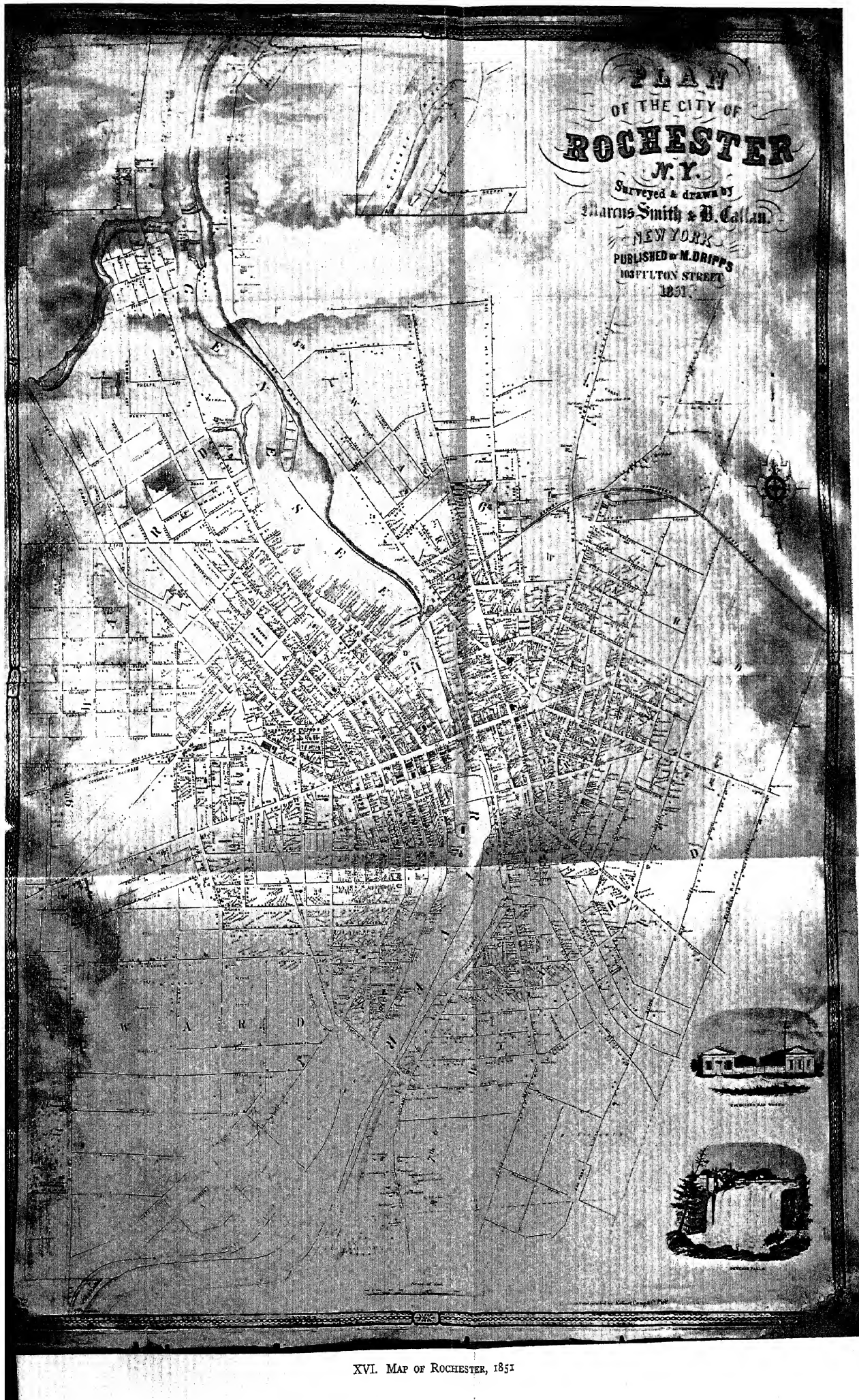
If some of Rochester's old men were already dreaming of the past, many of her young men were seeing new visions. News of the discovery of gold in California brought a surge of excitement here as elsewhere at the close of 1848. "Gold—bright, virgin, glittering gold—may be had in California for the digging," one editor commented, spurring several of his readers to join the gold rush.<sup>226</sup> A Rochester company, formed with a capital of \$7500, sent fifteen young men forth as "diggers," pledged to share the proceeds of the first year with their backers. Among the first to go was Nathaniel Rochester, twenty-five-year-old grandson of the city's founder, and a few months later his brother, John, sailed from New York with forty-five other young Rochesterians on the *Empire City*. Though several contracted the dread "Panama fever"

<sup>223</sup> Frederick Follett, *History of the Press of Western New York* (Rochester, 1847).

<sup>224</sup> Pioneer Assoc., "Minute Book of the Steering Committee," MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 9; Orsamus Turner's *Holland Purchase* had appeared the year before, and his *Phelps and Gorham's Purchase* was already in preparation.

<sup>226</sup> *Roch. Republican*, Dec. 28, 1848.



XVI. MAP OF ROCHESTER, 1851



while crossing the isthmus, finally in November, 1849, the second Rochester party, minus two casualties, arrived at San Francisco, where they learned the sad news of young Nathaniel's death a few weeks before. His brother, John, had already seen enough to be ready to return home, while others quickly followed, but many determined to make their fortunes on the new frontier.<sup>227</sup>

Charles S. Biden, one of the Rochester adventurers, wrote a sprightly series of letters under the jaunty title "Glimpses of the Elephant," in which the affairs of Rochester folk in California were blithely reported. "Several Rochester people will greet you by the boat that brings this letter, and many more next fall," predicted Biden early in 1850. Yet, as he watched twenty more Rochesterians land from one boat on its arrival at San Francisco that July, he wondered if it were true that "All Rochester is coming." Enough arrived to justify the opening of a Rochester House overlooking the Golden Gate, and several former Rochesterians found useful places in the new community, though no great strikes were reported. One young doctor, Elisha Ely, found farming more lucrative, and two former members of the Monroe County bar, R. A. Wilson and H. H. Haight, became judge and governor respectively in their adopted state, while Biden himself shortly emerged as editor of the *San Francisco Evening Picayune*.<sup>228</sup> Yet most Rochester *émigrés* were soon glad to get back home, for that was what the relatively comfortable and congenial city on the banks of the Genesee had at last become.

<sup>227</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 21, 1849; Raymond Scrapbook, p. 74.

<sup>228</sup> *Genesee Farmer*, Mar., 1849, pp. 67-72; *Rural New Yorker*, January, March, 1850; Raymond Scrapbook, pp. 141, 201-212.

## CHAPTER XI

### TOWARD URBAN MATURITY

1850-1854

THE EARLY FIFTIES revealed new democratic vistas and brought to fruition many of Rochester's youthful aspirations. The measure of achievement experienced in several fields matched the fullness of years enjoyed by the scattered pioneers who remained. Fresh ventures interested their sons, already in the prime of life, who shared with able newcomers the direction of the city's economic, civic, and cultural affairs, while vigorous younger men rose to positions of influence. Unprecedented prosperity and new comforts were enjoyed, but the hardships of the unfortunate and the problems of increased congestion were becoming evident. Fresh skills and more diversified habits and tastes appeared among the growing population, which already included large numbers from abroad. The influx of more cosmopolitan cultural patterns foreshadowed the end of the Yankee city of the water-power era.

#### ECONOMIC TURNING POINTS

With economic stability achieved during the late forties, expanding opportunities and rising values characterized the early fifties. The water power of the Genesee turned more wheels than ever before, and the canal trade reached a new peak, yet more rapid developments occurred in other directions. An increased reliance on steam, the rise of corporate capital and its stride toward monopoly, the efforts of labor to organize, and the expanding national markets were to be some of the long-range economic features of the city's mid-years, but their appearance in the fifties helped to delimit Rochester's water-power era, dominated as it had been by impulsive individual adventures, a labor supply flowing as freely as the water resources of the Genesee, and the favorable trade balance provided by flour exports. The economic pattern of an industrial city was taking shape, and while the community lost control over its trade routes, the security of its banks as well as of industrial and real-property investments permitted an aggressive use of surplus capital in distant fields.

Despite the progress of long-desired transport improvements, Rochester barely held its own as a commercial center. All the ports of entry on the Great Lakes, except Chicago, collected larger customs revenues,



and the steamboat services at eight American lake ports greatly exceeded those at the Genesee.<sup>1</sup> When the *Admiral* and the *American*, two new steamers running between Rochester and Toronto in 1852, failed to enjoy sufficient patronage, the construction of the Rochester and Lake Ontario Railway was urgently pressed, yet the opening of that line to freight traffic in 1854 left the problem unsolved. The exports for May, June, and July that year totalled \$149,591, well above those of 1847, but still far below the standards of Rochester's rivals. Though much was expected from the proposed reciprocity treaty with Canada, the absence of a major export article relegated the Genesee port to a position of secondary importance in the expanding lake traffic of the day.<sup>2</sup>

A source of discouragement was the slow progress of the canal's enlargement and the halting extension of the Genesee Valley Canal, neither task being completed until the early sixties. Nevertheless, as canal trade continued to increase in volume, the value of articles shipped out of Rochester reached \$8,402,530 in 1854, four times the value of ten years before and nearly double that of the mid-century,<sup>3</sup> yet the increase proved much more rapid at Buffalo and Oswego.<sup>4</sup> Syracuse boatyards still enjoyed an advantage in the construction of the larger boats accommodated by the improved eastern locks, but Rochester, with fourteen yards producing a total of 130 boats averaging above \$1,300 each in 1852, continued to supply the western canals.<sup>5</sup> One builder was glad to sell his boatyard for \$18,970 the next year, making way for a railroad car barn, yet the industry gave employment to 261 men in 1855 and turned out a product valued at \$341,500, far above that of any other boatbuilding center in the state.<sup>6</sup>

More gratifying were the numerous railroad improvements. The Rochester and Lake Ontario Railway, built between 1852 and 1854, the Rochester and Genesee Valley Railway, completed to Avon during the same years, and the Rochester and Niagara Falls Railway, finally opened to Lockport in 1853, all became vital commercial links in time.

<sup>1</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXVII (1852), 105; XXVIII (1853), 753-754.

<sup>2</sup> *Rochester Daily Union*, Nov. 27, 1852; Aug. 3, 5, 1854; *Rochester Daily Democrat*, Feb. 16, 1853; Hosea Rogers Papers, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Israel D. Andrews, *Report of Israel D. Andrews on the Trade and Commerce of the British North American Colonies, and upon the Trade of the Great Lakes and Rivers* (Washington, 1854), pp. 75-76. Though 487 clearances in 1851 were credited with a tonnage of 212,794, only 429 tons of steam vessels and 57 tons of sailing vessels were locally registered as most of the trade with Canada had to be conducted in Canadian bottoms. See above, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1855), Vol. 4, No. 95, Stmt. 3; (1851), Vol. 3, No. 56, Stmt. 3; *Senate Doc.* (1845), Vol. 3, No. 115, Table 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXIV (1851), 229; XXXIV, 609.

<sup>5</sup> *Union*, Nov. 26, Dec. 3, 1852; Samson, Scrapbook No. 51, pp. 7-9.

<sup>6</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 12, Feb. 26, 1853; *N. Y. Census* (1855), p. 357.



Indeed the city was so keenly interested in the valley railroad, looking to it as a potential coal carrier, that the municipality itself invested \$300,000 in the project. When construction stopped at Avon, local indignation spurred the authorities to sell control of their stock, in return for a guarantee on the investment, to Freeman Clarke, who was rapidly emerging as the leading banker and railroad financier in the city. At least the Avon line provided a connection with the Erie system, then reaching out in various directions to dominate the trade of the upper Genesee Valley, and a measure of competition was thus offered to the newly organized New York Central.<sup>7</sup>

The consolidation of the nine lines running between Buffalo and Albany, achieved in 1853, proved to be the most significant commercial development of the period. Bitter opposition to the act authorizing the merger expressed Rochester's concern over the possible effects of the monopoly.<sup>8</sup> However, local stockholders in the earlier companies welcomed the generous stock transfer, and although the huge capitalization of \$23,085,000 staggered the imagination, word that the first month's income amounted to \$600,000 gave reassurance. The effects of outside monopoly control appeared when freight rates on flour advanced late that fall, though moderate reductions were soon allowed. Expressing pleasure over the improved service, one editor who had opposed the merger became a staunch exponent of its advantages.<sup>9</sup> The expected competition between the old Auburn and Rochester Railway and the newly completed Rochester and Syracuse line was forestalled, as well as that between the Tonawanda and the Lockport roads west of the city—much to the relief of their respective stockholders—but Rochester, as the focal junction of these various branches of the Central, profited from their unified operation.<sup>10</sup>

Despite their wider extension and increased efficiency, the railroads contributed modest trade benefits as compared with the canal. The freight proceeds of local lines amounted to barely a fourth of the passenger income in 1851,<sup>11</sup> and while the total freight carried by the New York Central increased 60 per cent during its first year, passenger traffic likewise mounted.<sup>12</sup> The eastbound railroad freight delivered at

<sup>7</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 10, 1851; Feb. 24, 26, Mar. 4, 10, May 2, 3, 1853; *Union*, Mar. 3, 1854; Freeman Clarke Letters, for 1851-1854, MSS, courtesy of Mrs Buell Mills; Samson Scrapbook, No. 51, pp. 8-9; Andrews, *Trade and Commerce*, pp. 242-244.

<sup>8</sup> *Union*, Feb. 25, Apr. 16, 30, 1853; *Advertiser*, Mar. 22, 1853.

<sup>9</sup> *Union*, Sept. 27, Nov. 25, 1853; *Democrat*, Mar. 24, 1853.

<sup>10</sup> N. Y. Central Railway Co., *Agreement of Consolidation* (Albany, 1853); Edward Hungerford, *Men and Iron: The History of the New York Central* (New York, 1938), pp. 56-90.

<sup>11</sup> Assembly Doc. (1851), Vol. 3, No. 45.

<sup>12</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXX (1854), 311.

Albany in 1852 scarcely equaled a twelfth that discharged by the canal, yet the canal board became alarmed over sharper competition the next year.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile the canal's facilities provided an effective check on railroad freight rates; indeed the simplest means for cutting them further seemed to be that of the advocates of reduced canal tolls. Small reductions and other changes occurred in 1851 and again in 1854, effecting a drop in the tolls collected at Rochester to barely half those of 1844, though the tonnage was nearly three times as large.<sup>14</sup> The Rochester weighlock passed 9,504 boats in 1852, accrediting them with a cargo of 750,000 tons, possibly a seventh of it loaded at Rochester.<sup>15</sup>



Several other significant developments marked Rochester's economic activity in the early fifties. Flour exports actually fell off slightly as the increased output of Oswego, St. Louis, and other rivals flooded the market and challenged Rochester's preëminence.<sup>16</sup> With the extension of the Genesee Valley Canal making additional demands on the river's water resources, successive dry seasons in 1851 and 1852, further depleting the water power available at Rochester, forced the city's development in other directions. Long wet seasons in 1853 and 1855 struck additional blows by seriously damaging the wheat crop and turning Genesee farmers to other products. Monroe County's corn acreage in 1855 doubled that of 1845, while wheat fell off a fifth, yet corn exports likewise declined as that product was increasingly marketed in the form of bacon and pork.<sup>17</sup> The growing importance of the numerous secondary industries of the previous decade provided a more balanced and stable economy but gave rise to new labor and urban problems.

Though a third attempt to establish a board of trade did not occur until 1854, when again it was only briefly successful,<sup>18</sup> the chief object of the earlier board, the development of new industries, advanced apace. Various metal industries greatly expanded their output, increasing Rochester's canal shipments of ironware fourfold between 1844 and

<sup>13</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* XXIX (1853), 119.

<sup>14</sup> *Assembly Doc.* (1855), Vol. IV, No. 95, Stmt. 3; *Senate Doc.* (1845), Vol. III, No. 115, Stmt. 2; Whitford, *History of the Canal System*, pp. 958-962.

<sup>15</sup> *Union*, Dec. 31, 1852; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXIV (1851), 189-191. Eastbound freight on the canal greatly exceeded the Mississippi's exports in flour and other cereal products, though it could not rival the latter's tonnage in other respects.

<sup>16</sup> C. B. Kuhlmann, *Development of Flour Milling Industry in the United States* (Cambridge, 1929), pp. 56, 62, 83-85; *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXIV (1851), 229, 262, 301.

<sup>17</sup> *N. Y. Census* (1855), pp. 277-281; N. Y. State Agricultural Society, *Transactions* (1854), XIV, 492-496; *Genesee Farmer*, Jan. 1854, p. 14; P. W. Bidwell and J. I. Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States* (2nd ed.; New York, 1941), pp. 329-334ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Union*, Apr. 26, 29, 1854; Dec. 15, 1855.

1854.<sup>19</sup> The \$250,000 shipments of the latter date represented, however, but a fraction of the output of local metal-working shops, which numbered 35 and gave employment to 1,210,<sup>20</sup> for their chief market remained in the area itself. One of the foundries, that of Woodbury, Booth and Pryor, advertised as the largest manufacturer of stationary steam engines in the state, boldly offered a substitute for the failing power of the Genesee. This factory occupied an entire floor of the imposing four-story Novelty Works, located at the western edge of the business district with convenient access to both the railroad and the canal. The Novelty Works, which likewise housed the thermometer shop of George Taylor and the refrigerator factory of Smith, Badger and Company, stood as a symbol of the emerging industrial city, and it proved fitting that one of its steam engines should be installed in the large Ely mill, pride of the late thirties, helping to keep the old millstones in operation during seasons of low water.<sup>21</sup>

More than a score of factories employed upwards of fifty men each.<sup>22</sup> Two edge-tool shops, four furnaces, ten machine shops, two stove makers, one car factory, one agricultural implements plant, one paper mill, one chair factory, and two cotton factories were outstanding. The chair factory with 250 employees apparently had the largest labor force, though several of the "factories" reported in the *Census* were doubtless branches of one establishment and more than one may have had still larger numbers of employees. The Seth Jones Cotton Mill, with 175 tending its 6,000 spindles, had possibly the most costly factory, representing a capital of \$100,000, though the gas company's investment was 50 per cent greater and with 24 employees produced a product valued at \$65,109 in 1855. A small perfume factory employing seven men was nevertheless the largest of its kind in the state, while the city likewise led in carpenter tools, shoe pegs, boats, and machine tools.<sup>23</sup>

A major problem confronting most of these industries was the limited coal supply. Jonathan Child and other members of the Rochester clan, watchful of the community's interest, had started the import of Lehigh

<sup>19</sup> See note 14 above.

<sup>20</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. 330-344.

<sup>21</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 7, 1853; *Rural New Yorker*, Feb. 7, 1850; *Union*, May 13, 1854; Peck, *History of Rochester*, pp. 615-617.

<sup>22</sup> Legislative provision for limited liability corporate charters in 1848 (N. Y. *Laws of 1848*) prompted the incorporation of the Rochester Gas Light Company in 1848, the Jones Cotton Mill Company and the Journeymen Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Company in 1849, the Rochester Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Company in 1851, the Rochester Printing Association in 1852, the Rochester Brick and Tile Manufacturing Company and the Fairman's and Willard's Machine Tool Manufacturing Company in 1853, and the Rochester Iron Works Company in 1854, as well as numerous other corporations not engaged in manufacturing. See the Monroe County Clerk's "Docket of Incorporations," Court House.

<sup>23</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. 330ff.; *Union*, May 25, 1854.

coal on a commercial basis from Philadelphia in the late forties, selling directly to the foundries from the canal boats. Roswell Hart, entering the business in 1850, opened a coal yard where a surplus stock was kept available for stove and fireplace use, a market which was greatly stimulated the next year when the first anthracite arrived over the Erie and Genesee Valley railroads from Scranton.<sup>24</sup> Increased demands, balanced against the limited quantities and the long and expensive supply routes, quickly boosted the price from around \$5.00 to \$7.00 a ton. The recently established gas company imported a cheap grade of coal by boat from Ohio, paying \$4.50 a ton wholesale. The community anticipated more adequate supplies after completion of the canals linking Wilkes-Barre with the Erie by way of Seneca Lake, but meanwhile Rochester's industrial prospects were considerably embarrassed.<sup>25</sup>

Fortunately, neither the shoe nor the clothing shop suffered any check from this quarter. Four thriving tanneries provided an abundant supply of leather, while two shoe peg factories made Rochester the leading producer in the state of this essential article. The recently invented sewing machine, displayed at the State Fair at Rochester in 1851, attracted the attention of Jesse W. Hatch, one of the city's chief shoe merchant-manufacturers. After several discouraging experiments, a modified Singer machine, adapted to the task of sewing shoe uppers, was introduced late in 1852 or early the next year into the factories of Hatch and Company and Sage and Pancost, two of the first shoe firms in the country to make a practical use of the sewing machine. When, two years later, Jesse Hatch patented a die for cutting soles, the rapid development of the industry in Rochester was assured. Philadelphia, Boston, Lynn, and, in New York State, New York and Troy produced larger numbers of shoes at the mid-fifties, yet the mechanical developments applied by two of Rochester's seven shoe firms were outstanding, while the total number of their employees was exceeded locally only by the machine shops and possibly by the clothing workers.<sup>26</sup>

The Rochester clothing industry, for some reason overlooked by the state census of the mid-fifties (possibly because it could not properly be

<sup>24</sup> *Union*, Aug. 18, Sept. 10, 1852; Peck, *History of Rochester*, p. 241. The development of a monopoly among the firewood dealers emphasized the importance of this competing fuel supply; see *Union*, Feb. 1, 1853.

<sup>25</sup> *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XXXIII (1855), 323-329; Homer E. A. Dick, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc., No. 51, 56; *Republican*, Dec. 7, 1848.

<sup>26</sup> Jesse W. Hatch, "The Old Time Shoemaker and Shoemaking," R. H. S., *Pub.*, V, 79-95; *Advertiser*, Feb. 21, 1851; May 27, 1852; *Union*, Dec. 6, 1855; N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. 387-390; Blanche E. Hazard, *The Organization of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts Before 1875* (Cambridge, 1921), pp. 65-96. It is interesting to note that Isaac Merritt Singer first developed his mechanical skill while employed in a Rochester tool shop some two decades before, and that a working model of a sewing machine invented by an unnamed mechanic was exhibited in the city in 1835; *Democrat*, Dec. 10, 1835.

classified under the category of "tailors"), was undergoing revolutionary changes as the introduction of the sewing machine disrupted the trade. The number of "vest makers," "pants makers," and "tailoresses" mentioned in local directories in the early fifties suggests something of the growth and specialization which made Rochester one of the five principal clothing cities of the country by the end of the decade.<sup>27</sup> Yet the transition from the putting-out system to the factory remained far from complete, and most of the work was still performed in the crowded homes and boarding houses of the German-Jewish immigrants who were to contribute much to the growth of this industry.<sup>28</sup>

As the number of factory workers and other wage earners increased, labor agitation revived, producing a concerted trade union movement in 1853. When the blacksmiths, tin-plate makers, machinists, and iron workers organized their respective unions that spring, each achieved small gains, such as the 25-cent daily wage increase secured by the machinists.<sup>29</sup> Several building trades likewise organized that year, the carpenters and joiners winning a 20 per cent increase in wages.<sup>30</sup> The importance of the local printing industry appeared with the organization of a typographical union which soon became affiliated as Local No. 15 of the national union.<sup>31</sup> When numerous seamstresses gathered in April to complain of the inadequacy of their wages of 50 cents a day, public opinion won them a voluntary 25 per cent advance, but the women, determined to defend their own rights, established Rochester's first clothing workers' union a month later.<sup>32</sup> A tailors' association likewise formed, though few of its activities gained notice in the press.<sup>33</sup> Violent disturbances marked the efforts of immigrant canal laborers to secure an advance in rates and full payment of wages due; however, the organization and demonstrations of the barbers, the cigar makers, and the employees of a local harness shop were peaceful enough.<sup>34</sup> Apparently the most thoroughly organized strike of the period occurred in March, 1854, when fifty carpenters paraded from one construction job to the next, endeavoring to persuade all of their fellows to throw down

<sup>27</sup> U. S. Department of Commerce, *The Men's Factory Made Clothing Industry* (Washington, 1916), pp. 9-10; U. S. *Census* (1860), III, 377-378. By 1860 Monroe County was credited with 42 men's clothing firms employing 1555 as over against the 1047 employed by 67 shoe firms in the county, and the value of the product was nearly twice as large.

<sup>28</sup> Isaac A. Wile, *The Jews of Rochester* (Rochester, 1912), pp. 8-12.

<sup>29</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 9, 26, 1853; *Union*, Apr. 5, 1853. See above, pp. 202, 211.

<sup>30</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 7, 23, 1853; *Democrat*, Mar. 22, 1854; *Union*, Apr. 5, 1854.

<sup>31</sup> *Advertiser*, Mar. 21, 1853; *Democrat*, May 9, 1853.

<sup>32</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 7, 27, 1853; *Democrat*, May 7, 1853; Mar. 30, 1854.

<sup>33</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 19, 1853.

<sup>34</sup> *Advertiser*, May 3, 1853; *Union*, Nov. 21, 1853; May 1, 1854; *Democrat*, Mar. 22, 1854.

their tools. Unionism remained in its infancy, but the days of apprentice labor were passing.<sup>35</sup>



Other aspects of the city's economic life presented problems of a different sort, notably those growing out of a search for new markets. Several of the metal industries as well as the boatyards and furniture factories were developing markets in the West, where the expanding nurseries likewise sent most of their plantings. The constant stream of westward migrants helped to solve the market problems of the shoe and clothing firms by direct purchase at local stores, while a sufficient number stopped over long enough to keep real estate in a thriving condition. The city's slackening interest in the flour trade, as well as in the railroads and other transport lines, freed enterprise and capital for distant adventures.

The Rochester nurseries were rapidly emerging as the largest in the country. Ellwanger and Barry, trebling their acreage during the early fifties, made extensive purchases of new stock from the leading horticulturalists of Europe. The value of their imports reached a peak of \$9,657 for forty-one consignments in 1854, when already the young fruit and ornamental trees, growing in close, even rows over their 400-odd acres, were gaining repute throughout the West.<sup>36</sup> Neighboring orchards, restocked by the several local nurseries, began to flood Rochester with fruit. Nearly half a million bushels of apples were grown in the county in 1855, exceeded in the state only by the product of nearby Wayne County. With apples selling for 25 cents a bushel in the streets of Rochester during the fall of 1852, several canal boats, one loaded with 1,100 barrels, set out for a round-about trip to Boston. A new grape culture was developing along the steep hills overlooking several of the lakes southeast of Rochester, while cherries and pears as well as peaches and plums became increasingly abundant.<sup>37</sup> Little wonder the Genesee was still frequently alluded to as "perhaps the finest agricultural valley in the United States."<sup>38</sup>

The thriving nurseries revived a speculative interest in real estate.

<sup>35</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 22, 1854; Allan Gleason, "The History of Labor in Rochester," M. A. thesis, Univ. of Roch., *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> Ellwanger and Barry, "Invoice of Imports from Europe, 1854-1885," MS book in Ellwanger and Barry office; Blake McKelvey, "The Flower City: Center of Nurseries and Fruit Orchards," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 142-149.

<sup>37</sup> *Union*, Sept. 14, Nov. 9, 1852; *Rural New Yorker*, Nov. 22, 1856; N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. 277-281; N. Y. State Agricultural Society *Transactions* (1864), pp. 125-144.

<sup>38</sup> William Chambers, *Things As They Are In America* (Philadelphia, 1854), p. 101. Strictly speaking, most of the fruit orchards did not develop within the watershed of the Genesee Valley, yet they belonged to the Rochester hinterland generally described as the Genesee Country.



Not only were home developments on the city's outskirts vying with the nurseries for choice locations, but also the popular desire for trees and shrubs called for more spacious grounds. Continued population growth helped to account for this healthy expansion. The number of dwelling houses increased to 7,408 by 1855, when the families numbered 8,557 and the population 43,877, a 20 per cent growth during the half-decade.<sup>39</sup> Though no longer rivaling the size or rate of growth of many another western city (Buffalo's vitality was especially embarrassing), Rochester took pride in its greater proportion of elegant stone and brick homes. Already the favorite claim was voiced that there is "no city in the country (perhaps in the world) where so many citizens own their homes" as in Rochester.<sup>40</sup> The stimulus to real estate values was matched by the social results evident on all sides. "Follow out the shaded streets as they lead in all directions from the central localities," one editor recommended, "and you are reminded step by step of the *interest* and healthy stimulus of OWNERSHIP. You read it in the neatly-swept paved, gravelled, or planked sidewalk, in the well-cared-for shrubbery and flower plots, in the general provident aspect of things, as plainly as if 'This is Mine' was written over the gateway."<sup>41</sup>

The improvement of the central part of town likewise progressed. The new courthouse, the remodeled Smith's Block, rivaling the enlarged Reynolds Arcade valued at \$100,000, and other improvements promised to make Buffalo Street the pride of the business district as soon as a new block of brick stores should be completed on the old Chicken Row site, acquired by the Rochester Savings Bank for \$16,000 in 1853.<sup>42</sup> The "rich and handsome finish given to the new stores on Main Street" across the river, where "the immense salesrooms are ornamented with stucco work in the most beautiful style," told both of elegance and of prosperity.<sup>43</sup>

Old properties frequently changed hands. One mill, equipped with six run of stones, sold for \$20,000, while another with four run brought \$16,000. A store block on State Street, part of the estate of the late Dr. Anson Colman, sold for \$16,000, and J. W. Bissell acquired the Minerva Block on the corner of St. Paul and Main Streets for \$60,000. With the transactions of one week in June, 1853, totaling \$173,000,

<sup>39</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. 8, 236; Patrick Barry, *The Fruit Garden* (New York, 1852), p. 179.

<sup>40</sup> N. Y. *Census* (1855), p. 236; *Union*, Aug. 17, 1852; Dewey Scrapbook, General Information, III, 93.

<sup>41</sup> *Union*, Aug. 17, 1853.

<sup>42</sup> *Advertiser*, Sept. 4, 1851; *Union*, Aug. 17, 1852; *Democrat*, Jan. 19, 1853; Wm. A. Reynolds to N. Gray, Rochester, June 8, 1850, W. A. Reynolds Letter Book, MS, R. P. L.; Copy of Assessment Lists of First Ward properties, 1847, 1851, Mortimer F. Reynolds Papers, R. P. L.

<sup>43</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 28, 1853.

the owners of the Eagle Hotel advanced their asking price \$50,000 in a year's time. One editor noted that "Capitalists are still investing and operating extensively in real estate, and the rise in city property seems to be nearly equal to that witnessed in a speculative era."<sup>44</sup> The city's assessed valuation more than doubled during these years, surprising many property holders at their ability to pay the increased taxes.<sup>45</sup>

Rochester banks greatly benefited from the steady advance in real and other property values. The inadequate banking facilities of former days had been only partly relieved under the Free Banking Act, though two new banks replaced the Bank of Monroe after its charter expired in 1849. As the banks no longer felt compelled to tie up a major portion of their resources in wheat for the millers, profitable investments more frequently occurred in distant fields. Handsome returns were usually forthcoming in these years of national prosperity, and the Commercial Bank, after announcing a 20 per cent dividend in 1853, increased it to 50 per cent the next year, prompting one editor to praise the cashier, George R. Clarke, for achieving a record "perhaps unequalled in the history of banking."<sup>46</sup> Complaints against exorbitant interest rates and the lack of small change took the place of earlier fears for the security of the banks.<sup>47</sup> Despite the establishment of a loan association and a Sixpenny Savings Bank, three private bankers conducted profitable operations, supplementing the services of the six regular banks, whose total capitalization now reached \$1,380,000; yet credit continued to demand high rates.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile significant developments occurred under the general incorporation law of 1848. The advantages of limited liability stock companies stimulated increased investments, and three new insurance companies, three new plank road companies, two mutual benevolent associations, and a building and loan association, as well as a half-dozen industrial corporations and two telegraph companies, were organized in the city. The local capital structure thus became more flexible; enterprising entrepreneurs depended less on the banks, and the opportunity appeared to develop large companies capable of aspiring to monopoly control over various industries.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Union*, Nov. 29, 1852; *Democrat*, Jan. 17, 1853; Alfred Ely, "Real Estate Ledger," 1851-1857, MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>45</sup> D. W. Gilbert, "Government and Finances of Rochester," Table I. The assessed valuation rose from \$5,073,000 in 1850 to \$11,511,000 in 1853, and \$12,046,000 in 1854. See Board of Supervisors' *Reports*.

<sup>46</sup> *Union*, Apr. 7, 1854.

<sup>47</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 22, 1853; Assembly *Doc.* (1851), No. 9; (1855), No. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Samson Scrapbook, No. 42, p. 73; Roch. *Directory* (1853-54), pp. 36-38; Rochester Six-Penny Savings Bank Books, MSS, Courtesy of Miss Lois Badger, Rochester.

<sup>49</sup> Monroe Co. Clerk's "Docket of Incorporations"; Legislative *Doc.* (1920),



Rochester's outstanding response to these new opportunities for capital investment occurred in the field of telegraphy. The enthusiasm of Henry O'Reilly had first attracted the interest of several Rochesterians to the new invention in the mid-forties, when local capital backed the first lines built across Pennsylvania and throughout the Ohio Valley.<sup>50</sup> Rochester men likewise joined Utica investors in building other lines across New York State.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, as the numerous early lines erected under the Morse patent failed to discover a formula for peaceful coöperation, bitter conflicts over territory and patent rights ensued. Meanwhile the success of the new House patent presented an opportunity for still another system of telegraph lines. Judge Samuel L. Selden, previously associated with O'Reilly, took the lead in organizing the New York State Telegraph Company, of which Levi A. Ward, his brother-in-law, was chosen president, and Isaac R. Elwood, secretary, while Freeman Clarke became one of the directors. Construction started in 1850, chiefly with the support of Rochester capital, but competition from the rival Morse lines soon convinced Selden, Clarke, and Elwood that real profits could only result from an extension west of Buffalo. The energies of Hiram Sibley were enlisted in the project of an enlarged company, the New York and Mississippi Valley Printing and Telegraph Company, organized in 1851 to absorb the older concern and extend new lines under the House patent into the West. Other Rochesterians joined the venture, including Henry S. Potter, whose \$10,000 payment entitled him to the office of president, Isaac Butts of the *Union*, ex-mayor Isaac Hills, and Judge Addison Gardiner, among a dozen others. When construction westward began the next year, careful plans were formulated for a far-flung system under unified management at Rochester.<sup>52</sup>

The Rochester interests, however, were not the only ones concerned with the development of a telegraph empire in the early fifties. The Magnetic Telegraph Company of Morse and Amos Kendall, linking seaboard cities, was soon to be absorbed in the American Telegraph Company of Cyrus Field and Peter Cooper, who were already striving to cable the Atlantic. The Ezra Cornell lines operating in New York State on the Morse patent were reaching out westward, as were both

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No. 127; Charles M. Haar, "Legislative Regulation of New York Industrial Corporations: 1800-1850," *New York History*, XXII (1941), 191-196; Shaw Livermore, "Advent of Corporations in New York," *New York History*, XVI (1935), 286-298.

<sup>50</sup> Telegraph Papers, O'Reilly Doc.; James D. Reid, *The Telegraph in America* (New York, c. 1886), pp. 152-155ff.; Carleton Mabey, *The American Leonardo: A Life of Samuel F. B. Morse* (New York, 1943), pp. 288, 296-314.

<sup>51</sup> Reid, pp. 300-316.

<sup>52</sup> Reid, pp. 462-470; Freeman Clarke Papers, 1849-1852; "Hiram Sibley," *Dictionary of American Biography*, XVII, 145-146.

the Morse-Kendall southern lines and the House southern lines, while the several companies organized by O'Reilly already held the field in a loose fashion. The Rochester capital in several of the latter companies, particularly in the Lake Erie Telegraph Company, enabled Sibley to negotiate a lease of that line to the New York and Mississippi Printing Telegraph in 1854, which proved to be the first decisive step in the rapid process by which Sibley and Cornell, who soon joined forces, drew most of the interior lines into one vast monopoly under the Western Union name after 1856. O'Reilly, whose court battles had staved off a patent monopoly, clearing the way for the rise of such new companies as the Western Union, suffered with several other Rochesterians a total loss of earlier investments, while a few of Sibley's associates of 1851 failed to hang on long enough to share in the fabulous rewards of the years just ahead, but Rochester was nevertheless emerging at the mid-fifties as the telegraph capital of interior America.<sup>53</sup>

It was not without significance that most of these leaders, while risking their funds in distant ventures, continued to make Rochester their home. O'Reilly and other venturesome men of the forties had moved on when opportunities in Rochester appeared slim, but the business community had now gained a stability and integration which combined with other factors to make the city appear a satisfactory headquarters. The big families of the period—the Seldens, the Wards, the Smiths, the Clarkes, the Reynolds, the Elys, the Chapins, the Strongs, and of course the several branches of the Rochester clan—having grown up with the city, had intermarried and become an integral part of the community.<sup>54</sup> Vigorous individuals, such as Lewis Selye, Daniel Powers, Seth Jones, Isaac Butts, George Ellwanger, Patrick Barry, Samuel Wilder, Aaron Erickson, Isaac R. Elwood, D. Alonzo Watson, Hiram Sibley and the Churchill brothers were coming to the fore.<sup>55</sup> Less conspicuous names,

<sup>53</sup> Reid, pp. 462-470ff.; Mabee, pp. 322:338. See also Dexter Perkins, "Henry O'Reilly," *Rochester History*, January 1945.

<sup>54</sup> There were of course several distinct Smith, Ely, and Strong families, unaware as yet of possible common ancestors in colonial days. But the marriage ties between the Wards, Seldens, Chapins, Smiths, and Clarkes, and the alliances established by four daughters of King Strong of Pittsfield, Mass., linking the Reynolds, Brown, Gibbs, and Remington families, soon rivalled the ramifications of the Rochester clan. See George K. Ward, *Andrew Warde and His Descendants: 1597-1910* (New York, 1910), pp. 141, 224-227, 322-327, 422-423; Benjamin W. Dwight, *The History of the Descendants of Elder John Strong* (Albany, 1871), pp. 110, 911-913, 1347-1348, 1363-1364, 1369.

<sup>55</sup> All but Wilder and Watson, both recent arrivals, and Powers have been noted frequently above; see "Daniel Powers," *D. A. B.*, XV, 157-158. It is perhaps worth noting that all but two of these individuals, and members of five of the older families here mentioned, appeared in the list of 47 Rochesterians with incomes of \$10,000 or more in 1863 despite the low returns from real estate that year. See *Union and Advertiser*, Feb. 4, 1865.

as John Jacob Bausch, George Taylor, and Henry Michaels, appeared among other recent arrivals. Most of these men were long to be identified with the city they had made their home.

Quite different experiences awaited the great majority of Rochester's residents, for the migration into the West continued at flood tide. Only 34 per cent of a sampling of over four hundred names in the 1849-50 *Directory* reappeared in the *Directory* of 1853-54, representing, if this rough estimate may be accepted, a slight acceleration over the drifting population of the previous five-year period. Clearly the community's economic pattern did not as yet offer sufficiently attractive opportunities to the rank and file to hold their allegiance in face of the frequent advertisements of labor shortages on western railroads and other projects.<sup>56</sup> Western lake ports—Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, and especially Chicago—were gaining on such river giants as Cincinnati and St. Louis, but they still had far to go, and the canal port on the Genesee continued to look down on several of them.<sup>57</sup>

Apparently the most restless of Rochester's citizens were the Irish, who numbered 7002 in 1855, the largest foreign group. The stream of newcomers from abroad was ever increasing, and the State *Census* of 1855 revealed that 44 per cent of the city's population was foreign-born. The American-born children of immigrant parents (there were about 5,000 in this category in 1850 when the foreign-born numbered around 7,000) swelled the total of the foreign nationality groups to well over half the population. Scant records remain concerning the occasional Swiss, Norwegian, or Slav, but many of the Germans, whose 6,554 representatives comprised the second largest foreign group, were finding congenial employment in the shoe and clothing industries; the favorable opportunities for acquiring a small home of their own proved especially attractive to this group, soon to become the largest single nationality in Rochester. Native-born Rochesterians, if those born in the county are included, numbered 14,554, and another 9,934 hailed from other parts of the country, chiefly from New York and New England. However, as many of these were the children of foreign-born parents, the formerly dominant Yankee stock, though still supplying much of the leadership, faced innumerable adjustments as Rochester headed into the more cosmopolitan years ahead.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Rochester *Directory* (1849-50), (1853-54); *Genesee Farmer*, September, 1850, pp. 201-202; *Union*, Dec. 29, 1852.

<sup>57</sup> Andrews, *Trade and Commerce*, pp. 613-812; Bessie L. Pierce, *A History of Chicago* (New York, 1937), I, 43-44. Chicago passed Rochester in population during the mid-fifties, as Buffalo had a decade before, but the other lake ports on the American side did not come up to Rochester in population until the mid-sixties. Toronto likewise trailed behind Rochester until the late sixties.

<sup>58</sup> James F. W. Johnston, *Notes on North America* (Boston, 1851), pp. 204, 217; N. Y. *Census* (1855), pp. 105-111. The Swiss numbered 259, Norwegians 39,

## CIVIC PERPLEXITIES

The growing complexity of urban life appeared in the urgent character of several of Rochester's civic problems. Mounting pressure for local improvements finally broke the economy restraints of the late forties, nearly doubling the tax levy, while the city's bonded indebtedness increased threefold. Yet several important public works were neglected, and institutional efforts to care for the increasing number of unfortunates proved insufficient. The limited civic facilities were dramatically revealed during a renewed cholera epidemic in 1852, and again the next year by waves of destructive fires and juvenile delinquency. The task of assimilating thousands of immigrants, many in desperate circumstances, presented problems which, as in most urban communities of the day,<sup>59</sup> proved much too complex for simple solution, with the result that civic achievements lagged far behind those in the economic and cultural fields.

Mounting prosperity had already weakened the influence of local economy advocates at the mid-century. The first short-sighted plan for a new but modest courthouse fortunately gave way to a more adequate structure, designed to accommodate both city and county offices. The council undertook to pay \$30,000 in addition to the \$25,000 raised by the county, and before the job was completed in 1851 another \$8,337 had been added to the city's share.<sup>60</sup> A huge iron bell, six feet across the mouth, was soon installed in the belfry, from whence its sweet tones sounded morning, noon, and evening hours as well as fire alarms. With other major outlays in the offing, a thorough revision of the assessments was undertaken in order to secure a more adequate tax base. The new city charter of 1850 facilitated matters by providing for the election of seven assessors, one from each of five districts and two at large. Each property was to be appraised by the district's assessor and two others, thus assuring uniform standards. The result was a complete revision which more than doubled the city's assessment total, bringing it up to \$10,000,000 in 1851, while another 25 per cent was added by the mid-fifties.<sup>61</sup>

The city streets continued to present the greatest fiscal burden.

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while the 11 Poles probably represented a fraction of the Slavs. See Norman T. Lyon, *History of the Polish People in Rochester* (Rochester, 1935), pp. 5-15. Unfortunately the United States Census of 1850 failed to complete its survey of Rochester and several other New York cities in time for inclusion in several statistical tables. A study of the manuscript records now in the Court House helps to correct the deficiency.

<sup>59</sup> John A. Fairlie, *Municipal Administration* (New York, 1910), pp. 83-90, *passim*.

<sup>60</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 14, 28, 1850, *Common Council Proceedings*, Sept. 21, 1852.

<sup>61</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 18, 1851; *Rochester Charter* (1850), Title 4, Sections 71-72.

Despite the large expenditures in this field during the previous period, the marshy character of the soil necessitated a frequent distribution of gravel at a cost of around \$10,000 annually. An experiment with Medina stone blocks, tried out on Main Street in 1851 (following their introduction on Broadway, New York, two years before), proved so successful that they were laid on Buffalo and State Streets the next year, but the initial cost was so much greater than for macadam that the city had to be content with the paving of a few central squares. Meanwhile, the failure of several of the plank road companies to keep their routes in repair forced the city to come to their aid.<sup>62</sup> The recently introduced gas lights entailed a constantly increasing expenditure, reaching ten times the average of the forties by 1853, with no limit in sight. Indeed, the 200 gas lamps of the day served only the central district, leaving the outlying areas to oil lamps, which sometimes proved more effective than the gas, especially during cold spells, when the gas mains frequently froze shut.<sup>63</sup> The sewers likewise remained in a neglected state until the health authorities, goaded to action by the cholera epidemic of 1852, branded them as the city's worst health hazard.<sup>64</sup> Though the council voted to spend \$55,233 for sewer improvements during the next two years, the lack of a general plan limited their value.<sup>65</sup> When the deterioration of Main Street Bridge prompted the council to request action by the county supervisors in 1853, nothing was accomplished until the city in desperation agreed to shoulder the major expense for the reconstruction of this vital bridge two years later.<sup>66</sup>

The equipment of a dozen fire companies was kept in repair at a slowly increasing cost that reached \$10,540 in 1854. The volunteer system, which made this economy possible, necessitated frequent disciplinary action to curb the boisterous rivalry between two factions designated as the "main-stays" and the "fag-ends."<sup>67</sup> A more serious handicap resulted from the limited water supply. Stimulated in part by Buffalo's successful action in 1852, a Rochester Water Works Company

<sup>62</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 18, 1850; *Union*, Sept. 16, Oct. 7, 1852; *C. C. Proc.*, Apr. 7, 1851, Apr. 5, Aug. 31, 1852; Gilbert, "Government and Finances," pp. 221-225. Few American cities could boast of better methods of paving than Rochester in the mid-fifties, though the marshy soil made the local problem more difficult than in many communities; see Fairlie, *Municipal Administration*, pp. 230-232.

<sup>63</sup> *C. C. Proc.*, Feb. 27, 1852; *Union*, Feb. 17, 1856; Gilbert, "Government and Finances," pp. 203-207, Table III, Part 2

<sup>64</sup> *Report of the Board of Health on Cholera as It Appeared in Rochester in 1852* (Rochester, 1852), pp. 43-48; *Democrat*, Aug. 2, 1853.

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert, pp. 226-228. Most other American cities were likewise plagued by unsatisfactory sewer systems at the mid-century; see Fairlie, *Municipal Administration*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>66</sup> *C. C. Proc.*, Oct. 4, Dec. 27, 1853; June 19, July 30, 1855; *Union*, Apr. 8, June 21, Sept. 15, 1854.

<sup>67</sup> *Democrat*, May 4, 1853; *C. C. Proc.*, Apr. 5, 1852; July 26, 1853.

was chartered that year and a survey made which indicated the feasibility of a plan to tap Hemlock Lake, some thirty miles south of the city. The estimated cost, \$575,000, postponed further action, however, compelling the council to make new appropriations for small underground reservoirs.<sup>68</sup> Their inadequacy, demonstrated again and again when the fire fighters pumped the reservoirs dry in the first round,<sup>69</sup> prompted the city fathers to keep their fingers crossed.

As a providential shower or shift of wind did not always appear in time, frequent destructive fires occurred in the central district, where the congested buildings now lined up in solid phalanx for several blocks in a row. Though an enterprising merchant imported a stock of the newly invented "fire annihilators,"<sup>70</sup> fire losses showed a steady increase over the previous high figure of \$112,000 for 1849. The outbreak of the great Blossom Hotel fire in January, 1854, in which the entire block at the northeast corner of Main and St. Paul Streets was destroyed, with an estimated loss of \$155,000, cast a lurid light upon a civic hazard which was not brought under control until 1874.<sup>71</sup>

The functions of the police likewise increased with urban growth. The cost for the night watch and other small police services averaged just under \$4,000 annually before 1854 when the department was reorganized and twenty officers appointed, increasing the outlay to \$14,314 that year. Drastic action had become necessary because of the great number of beggars who seemed to overrun the streets. Adult arrests in the city during the first quarter of 1853 numbered 648, while 75 youths were taken into custody during the same period.<sup>72</sup>

A serious wave of juvenile delinquency came to light that March when a fight between two boys in broad daylight in the central part of the city ended with one killing the other.<sup>73</sup> Shocked by the crime, some 200 citizens formed a Juvenile Reform Society, prompting the city to appoint two truant officers to make a careful survey of all children not in school. Approximately three fourths of the 500 boys and 200 girls investigated during the next three months were persuaded to enroll in school or seek some regular employment. The new state school law of 1853, re-

<sup>68</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 5, 1851; *C. C. Proc.*, 1852, p. 4; Charles B. Stuart, "Engineer's Report," Sept. 29, 1853, Clarke MSS; William A. Reynolds, Minutes of Rochester Water Works Company, May 31-Oct. 24, 1855, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>69</sup> Raymond Scrapbook, p. 104.

<sup>70</sup> *Union*, Nov. 23, 1852.

<sup>71</sup> *Union*, Jan. 24, Feb. 10, 1854; Peck, *History of Rochester*, pp. 214, 578-580. This was the civic field in which Rochester contrasted most unfavorably with many of its contemporaries during the fifties and sixties; see Fairlie, *Municipal Administration*, pp. 273-274.

<sup>72</sup> *Union*, Sept. 18, 1852; May 10, 1854; *Democrat*, Apr. 7, 1853; *C. C. Proc.*, Apr. 29, May 2, 1854.

<sup>73</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 9, 14, 1853.



quiring the attendance of children between the ages of five and fourteen for at least four months each year unless regularly employed, when explained to negligent parents, helped to relieve the situation. But a second fierce fight occurred between two truant lads on Sophia Street bridge that December, and the agents were forced to report "33 boys and 18 girls virtually homeless, destitute of clothing, and without care, instruction, or employment of any kind." As the idea that all beggars were impostors had to be discarded, the city rented an old tavern as a House for Idle and Truant Children, where a score of boys under 14 years of age received shelter and some instruction.<sup>74</sup>

The popularity of institutional treatment appeared on all sides. Truant girls were lodged with their wayward elder sisters in the Home for the Friendless, opened at the corner of East Avenue and Alexander Street late in 1849. Aided by charitable contributions which totalled only \$1,042 in 1854, when the admissions for the year numbered 253,<sup>75</sup> the Home afforded but temporary shelter to a shifting population. The Western House of Refuge, erected by the state in 1849 on a 42-acre farm at the northwestern edge of the city, was the area's most substantial correctional institution, with many of the 150 boys confined there in 1852 coming from other western counties. Rochester, directly concerned with the fate of those discharged, absorbed most of the girls from the Home for the Friendless as domestic helpers, while the boys of the House of Refuge were disposed of to valley farmers or sent east to staff the whaling ships of New England.<sup>76</sup> Such older institutions as the jail and the almshouse, maintained by the county with few changes, faced serious difficulties as the number of their inmates increased.<sup>77</sup> The recent establishment of workhouses in Buffalo and Albany suggested a possible solution for Rochester, one that would provide a useful labor force. The county authorities accordingly erected a workhouse on a portion of the almshouse farm, but the first section of the brick cell house, built on the plan of Auburn prison, was not ready for use until November, 1854.<sup>78</sup>

While several institutions were more directly concerned with the care of the poor than the delinquent, frequently the distinction disappeared. The two orphan asylums continued with creditable results, somewhat relieved by the possibility of transferring troublesome charges to one

<sup>74</sup> *Laws of New York*, 76th Sess. (1853), pp. 358-360; *Report of the Board of Managers of the Rochester Juvenile Reform Society* (1853); *Union*, Sept. 18, 1852; Dec. 12, 1853.

<sup>75</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 23, 1853; *Seventh Annual Report of the Rochester Home for the Friendless* (Rochester, 1856).

<sup>76</sup> Western House of Refuge, *Annual Reports*, 1850-54; *Union*, Aug. 23, 1852.

<sup>77</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 7, Oct. 25, 1853.

<sup>78</sup> *Union*, Sept. 6, 1852; Nov. 20, 1854; Monroe County Work House *Annual Report* (Rochester, 1856), pp. 31-48.

of the newer institutions.<sup>79</sup> The general prosperity enjoyed by the community doubtless helped to keep the city's expenditures for poor relief within modest bounds, though the increasing number of destitute immigrants forced a steady advance which raised the outlay to \$17,133 by 1854. An immigrant agent, appointed in 1852 to assist Germans passing through the city, engaged a German doctor to treat his sick countrymen.<sup>80</sup> Despite the large share of the poor fund distributed as outdoor relief to these destitute migrants, assisting many to resume their journey westward, wretched circumstances and tragic experiences continued to characterize their lot, though kinsfolk as well as church groups rendered some help.<sup>81</sup>



The circumstance which brought Rochester's shortcomings most clearly into the limelight was the 1852 cholera epidemic. The city's previous experiences with this dread plague prompted the authorities to spring into action with the first rumor of its approach. In former years the campaign to clean up the city, open the sewers clogged during the winter, and drain the stagnant backyard pools had been delayed until June, but the task was now begun in April, though several heavy rains interrupted the work. By June most of the principal streets appeared in fair condition, while much refuse had been removed from the canal basins and feeders, so that the sanitary conditions were declared to compare favorably with those of any city west of the Hudson. Nevertheless, many open drains on some of the back streets as well as numerous cesspools and cellars were green with slime, great heaps of unburied manure were noted in back alleys, and several tenements were described as public nuisances. Unfortunately the limited authority of the board of health and the uncertainty as to whether its bills would be approved by the supervisors prevented forthright action.<sup>82</sup>

Before further progress could be made, the first case of cholera appeared on June 8th, and nine developed before the end of the month. The seemingly mild character of the epidemic delayed efforts to secure an emergency hospital until the middle of July, when the cholera victims were rapidly increasing. No house could then be found for several additional weeks until, in desperation, the board requisitioned a building in the Negro quarter on High Street. In all, 68 patients were admitted to this shelter, and much satisfaction was felt when only 24 of them died. Unfortunately, the number of deaths in the community proved sufficiently appalling, mounting rapidly to 180 in August and

<sup>79</sup> *American*, Mar. 23, Aug. 8, 1853; *Union*, Mar. 20, Oct. 30, 1854.

<sup>80</sup> *C. C. Proc.*, Dec. 14, 1852; "City Treasurer's Annual Report," 1854-55, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Democrat*, May 28, 1853; *Union*, June 11, 1853; Dec. 7, 1855.

<sup>82</sup> *Report on Cholera*, pp. 7-17, 51-52.



reaching a total variously reported as 420 and 469 by November when the epidemic subsided.<sup>83</sup>

The fact that "no merchant, nor member of the bar, nor any minister of the gospel fell in the contest" afforded some comfort, though Eugene Sintzenich, long active as a teacher of landscape painting, whose panorama of the Holy Land had been completed the previous fall, died of cholera "in the midst of the most distressing poverty and abject want."<sup>84</sup> The city's peculiar situation—built for the most part on flat tableland, inclined to be swampy, with the river, canal ways, and basins providing ample surface for evaporation—created a humid atmosphere, accentuated by the spray from the falls, the evaporation from the lakes to the north and west, and finally the heavy rains which continued intermittently throughout the summer.<sup>85</sup> Sharp differences of opinion developed as to the nature and treatment of the disease, particularly between the regular physicians, the homeopaths, and members of the eclectic school;<sup>86</sup> yet all agreed that these general climatic circumstances accounted at least in part for the severity of the epidemic in Rochester.

The health authorities, who spent a total of \$8,098 during the emergency, early became alarmed at the frightful living conditions in several of the worst tenements. Whatever they lacked in knowledge of the disease and its proper treatment, the health officers made up in courage and candor, as three fatalities among the physicians and the graphic character of their report demonstrated:

The house [of the first victim, the board reported] was an old rookery—without a cellar, and presented inside the usual appearances of the residences of the poorer classes of laborers with the usual smell—but nothing very remarkable—the father still lying sick in a small ill-ventilated room adjoining the kitchen, which also answered the purpose of a dining room, and probably of a dormitory also at night. The yard in the rear of the house presented nothing objectionable—it was in a good condition—but at the west end of the house a small pile of rubbish was discovered, and almost adjoining the house, a small pen containing two small pigs. . . . In front and near the door was an opening into the main sewer—into which the slops were thrown—but the water was running clear with a free current.<sup>87</sup>

The next five deaths occurred in the "Old Factory Block" which stood next to the above-mentioned house with the same sewer running through and flooding its cellar. The tenants in that "old and decayed" building numbered fifty-six persons, including twenty-five children, who

<sup>83</sup> *Report on Cholera*, pp. 17-23, 30-31; Betsy C. Corner, "A Century of Medicine in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIII, 369-373.

<sup>84</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 5, 1851; *Report on Cholera*, p. 34.

<sup>85</sup> *Report on Cholera*, pp. 8-14.

<sup>86</sup> *Report on Cholera*, pp. 33-34, note.

<sup>87</sup> *Report on Cholera*, p. 25.

lived "in close, ill-ventilated rooms." Taylor's Block stood close by, "overflowing with a class of persons of the poorest description, filthy in their habits, and not a few of them intemperate—eating, drinking, smoking, and sleeping, in the same apartment," so that the board was not surprised at its numerous cholera fatalities.<sup>88</sup>

Let us now look into Lester's Block [the Report continued], rendered notorious by the deaths of 25 individuals who were swept away in the course of a single week. [A] well-built brick building, about 100 feet in length by 40 feet in breadth—three stories high . . . [it stands] in a clean and healthy part of the city: but not very far from the Factory Block. . . . A drain or sewer for slops [enters] the cellar through which it runs nearly its entire length . . . so that any noxious gases generated in it readily find their way . . . into every part of the building. . . . Upstairs . . . each front room has a bed room and a closet in its rear, and the same arrangement is made for the rooms in the rear of the building. Between the front and rear rooms [flats] there is no communication by doors, windows or ventilators. . . . There is no provision made for the admission of light or fresh air into the bed rooms . . . and the air . . . must necessarily become exceedingly foul and offensive.

The class of tenants who occupied this block were comparatively respectable—many of them were clean and tidy, and there is no evidence that their habits were bad. But occupying, as they did, a position immediately over the poisoned air imprisoned in the cellar beneath, and immured during the hottest days of July in the midst of the foul and foetid air in their own confined apartments, is it wonderful that so flagrant a violation of the laws of hygiene . . . should be visited with its appropriate penalty? The singular fatality among the occupants of this block, by which they were reduced to nearly one-half their original number, furnished a severe but well-merited rebuke to the ignorance and cupidity of landlords . . . and furnishes a potent argument in favor of a law requiring all persons proposing to erect buildings, to submit their plans to some competent tribunal for its approval, with special reference to light and ventilation.<sup>89</sup>

Many similar nuisances were described, and the board found Sherman's Block on Ford Street, Robb's Block and Chicken Row, both on Buffalo Street, though condemned in 1849, again overcrowded and in a worse state than the Old Factory Block. Action by the board closed a few of these structures; in one case the inmates were ordered to move out within twenty-four hours, but the problem of finding accommodations proved so great that the procedure was seldom applied.<sup>90</sup>

The community felt impatient for relief, and when the number of new cases decreased in September one editor noted with pleasure that "the decline of the epidemic has brought out the Swiss girls with their

<sup>88</sup> *Report on Cholera*, p. 39.

<sup>89</sup> *Report on Cholera*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>90</sup> *Report on Cholera*, pp. 41-42; *Union*, Aug. 17, 1852.

tambourines and lively songs."<sup>91</sup> Yet Rochester did not return completely to its old complacent ways, for the board submitted recommendations as well as statistics,<sup>92</sup> and the newly elected mayor the next spring took occasion to indorse their demand for a better sewer system.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, much criticism greeted the mayor's action supplying carts to haul away the refuse cleaned out of the canal and other waste places. Complainants observed that the leaky carts dripped their filth along the streets leading to the dumping platform on the river bank, with the result that "the whole central portion of the city is filled with a stench." Possibly the grievance cloaked another issue, since economy dictated that the job be left to the scavengers licensed by the city to collect garbage at private expense, but, as the health authorities had no power to compel the canal board to act, the mayor determined to proceed with the job.<sup>94</sup>

The civic scene took a new turn early in 1853 with the outbreak of serious juvenile disorders. Several accounts of a wave of vagrancy and crime in Philadelphia had recently appeared in the press, together with a discussion of the wretched hovels into which so many of the poor were crowded and from which disorderly forays emerged. Similar conditions were developing in other cities, the editor of the *Democrat* noted, declaring soberly that the time to correct the situation is "while the thing is young." Looking at the record of the last few months in Rochester, the editor could not escape the conclusion that "this is a serious amount of crime and pauperism for a city like ours."<sup>95</sup>

Something would have to be done about these conditions in time, but meanwhile the city had strained its credit in behalf of the Genesee Valley Railway. Indeed, \$300,000 was invested in that cause, with little objection as long as the prospect of tapping a new coal supply appeared bright. By 1854, however, that illusion had been shattered and the security of the stock threatened by Freeman Clarke's suit against the city.<sup>96</sup> A heavy debt burden thus descended upon the city's shoulders, to the great benefit of the railroad's other chief stockholders, though the situation did not become clearly evident until 1856. Accordingly when a reform campaign started in the spring of 1853, with the mixed

<sup>91</sup> *Union*, Sept. 16, 1852.

<sup>92</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 14, Dec. 30, 1852.

<sup>93</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 8, 1853.

<sup>94</sup> *Union*, May 2, July 2, Aug. 25, 1854; Board of Health, "Record of Bills" (1852-56), MS, Roch. Hist. Soc.

<sup>95</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 30, Apr. 7, 1853. See also Martin, *Standard of Living in 1860*, pp. 170-174.

<sup>96</sup> *C. C. Proc.*, Feb. 25, 1853; Feb. 13, 1855; *Freeman Clarke vs. the City of Rochester. Argument of E. Griffin for the City before the Supreme Court, Monroe County, General Term* (Rochester, 1857); *Democrat*, Apr. 4, 1857. The stock ultimately paid dividends sufficient to amortize all changes.

purpose of temperance and economy, the results proved negligible.<sup>97</sup> The Democrats enjoyed control of the local government, despite their regular defeat in national elections, from 1851 to 1854, but the victory of Dr. Maltby Strong in March of the latter year marked the rise of a new issue, the nativism of the Know-Nothing party, with disturbing social repercussions.



Meanwhile, the campaign to spread the public school services demanded larger outlays. The expenditures more than doubled in the five years, reaching \$47,143 by 1854, while the state fund likewise increased, comprising approximately a fifth of the total throughout the period. More than \$30,000 was invested in new buildings, somewhat relieving the congestion in some schools, yet far from adequate for the 7,811 enrolled in 1853.<sup>98</sup> Though Rochester failed to maintain the standing it had enjoyed among educational pioneers in the mid-forties, democratic advances were achieved.

When the new city charter of 1850, by abolishing the old school districts and giving the board full control over all schools, provided a basis for educational reform, the opportunity was taken to organize senior departments in eight of the sixteen schools, with male teachers as principals in charge of the advanced pupils.<sup>99</sup> While this arrangement did not satisfy those who advocated a public high school, it helped to relieve the situation created by the burning of the Collegiate Institute in 1851. The school authorities selected three or four boys annually for the normal school, but other lads unable to attend a neighboring academy had to content themselves with the district schools. Frequent petitions that the second floor of School Number 1 be converted into a high school produced no immediate results, though the campaign was to win success in 1857.<sup>100</sup>

The real problem, that of reaching the large number of unschooled children, remained unsolved. After the decline in the mid-forties, private school enrollments increased until they exceeded 2,000 during the early fifties. When added to those in public school in the peak year of 1854, the total reached 10,828, slightly better than two-thirds of the children of school age.<sup>101</sup> Yet this fairly high enrollment level for the day was

<sup>97</sup> It is possible, though the evidence is inconclusive, that this reform campaign was a disguised nativist movement, similar to that in New York City the year previous; see Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York State*, pp. 80-83.

<sup>98</sup> Board of Education, *Eleventh Annual Report*, p. 24; Gilbert, "Government and Finances," Tables II, III, IV.

<sup>99</sup> Dorothy S. Truesdale, "The Three R's in Rochester: 1850-1900," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XVII, 101-104.

<sup>100</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 9, 1853; M. Lucile Bowen, "The Rochester Free Academy," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XVII, 75-77.

<sup>101</sup> Board of Education, *Annual Report* (1855), p. 9.

not an attendance record, and it was not maintained in succeeding years. Indeed it doubtless resulted in part from a loose interpretation of the state truancy law of 1853, which proved such a timely aid in the face of the wave of juvenile delinquency sweeping Rochester that year. Truant officers had authority only over delinquent children, for whom the House for Idle and Truant Children was established, but many parents were persuaded to send their children to school for the first time.<sup>102</sup> Advocates of a compulsory school attendance law, such as that adopted in Massachusetts in 1852, won little support as yet, though the campaign, like that for a high school, was gaining ground.<sup>103</sup>

The board could, however, pride itself on other modest achievements. An evening school, started in the late fall of 1853, continued through a four-months period, despite occasional difficulties with the gas lights. Seven teachers served the 400 enrollees, many of them recently arrived immigrants eager to learn English. While the cost reached \$875, the board considered it well spent, especially in view of the fact that most of these scholars would otherwise "have spent their evenings in the streets, and at various places of resort, where evil, and only evil, would be learned."<sup>104</sup> At least a few of the schools developed playgrounds, and several communities endeavored to beautify these increasingly important civic centers, as when Ellwanger and Barry donated trees to ornament School Number 14.<sup>105</sup>

Few developments of importance occurred among the private or parochial schools, although great changes were impending in the latter by the end of the period. St. Joseph's new schoolhouse, opened in 1852, and the arrival two years later of the Sisters of Notre Dame foreshadowed an extension of Catholic education. Girls meanwhile predominated in parochial schools, as well as in other private select and infant schools. After the burning of the Collegiate Institute in February, 1851, the only accommodations for older boys were those of the somewhat temporary University Grammar School where Nehemiah H. Benedict and one assistant cared for 70 to 100 lads,<sup>106</sup> many of them from out of town. As in the city schools, there were as yet no grades, while the department division of the public schools was only approximated in the private schools by their specialization in primary or grammar subjects, though their small enrollments facilitated individual instruction.

<sup>102</sup> See above, p. 337.

<sup>103</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 17, 1853.

<sup>104</sup> Board of Education, *Annual Report* (1854), p. 10.

<sup>105</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 22, 1853.

<sup>106</sup> Zwierlein, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism," pp. 122, 133-136; John R. Russell, "Library Archives Shed New Light on University's Grammar School," *Rochester Alumni-Alumnae Review*, December, 1941-January, 1942, pp. 11-14.

The principal teachers of the forties gave way to new leaders, notably Lucilia Tracy, in charge of the Seward Seminary,<sup>107</sup> and Nehemiah Benedict, destined to dominate secondary education in Rochester for many years. An effort to develop a girls' college in the old seminary building on Alexander Street was launched in 1852 by Jacob Gould, who had recently married Sarah T. Seward, its founder, but Barleywood Female University, as it was called, despite the enthusiastic support of Dr. Chester Dewey, Lewis H. Morgan, and Levi A. Ward, failed to attract patronage and soon closed its doors.<sup>108</sup>

The community was not certain as to where responsibility for the maintenance of a library resided. Each schoolhouse continued to serve this function in a modest fashion, with state funds available for books averaging \$500 annually during the period, but the service proved most inefficient and haphazard.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand the removal of a large portion of the Chancellor Walroth Library from Albany to Rochester in 1850 greatly benefited local attorneys,<sup>110</sup> while the Athenaeum and Mechanics Association became the focal center of the lyceum movement in up-state New York.<sup>111</sup> Under the leadership of Levi A. Ward, Chester Dewey, and William A. Reynolds, among others, the annual series of lectures attracted a healthy membership, netting a surplus of approximately \$300 each year, over and above the lecture fees, for library maintenance. The book collection, still housed in the Arcade, was steadily increased to "between 7,000 and 8,000" by 1854, when a new catalogue showed "Novels and Tales" and "History and Biography" out in the lead, with the divisions of "Travel," "Theology," and "Natural Science" likewise well stocked.<sup>112</sup> Novels by Herman Melville, George Sand, and Charlotte Brontë were available, as well as books by Francis Parkman, Jeremy Bentham, William Paley, Swedenborg, Charles Dar-

<sup>107</sup> Blake McKelvey, "Private Educational Enterprise Since the Mid-Century," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVII, 154-159.

<sup>108</sup> Barleywood Female University, "Minutes of the Trustees," MS, Univ. of Roch.

<sup>109</sup> *Union*, Apr. 19, 1855; Blake McKelvey, "Early Library Developments," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVI, 45-47.

<sup>110</sup> Fred E. Rosbrook, "The Law Library," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVI, 172-174. The Law Library, starting with 3000 volumes, attracted favorable notice from visitors, see Johnston, *Notes on North America*, p. 204.

<sup>111</sup> Ralph L. Rusk, *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York, 1939), IV, 316, 324, 462. When Emerson wrote in 1852, "As you gentlemen at the Rochester Association have hitherto appeared to keep the keys of the line of cities might I crave your kind help to arrange a plan for me," he received the desired appointments, and again in 1854 Rochesterians arranged a calendar of lectures which included appointments at Utica, Buffalo, Penn Yan, Syracuse, and Rome as well as Rochester.

<sup>112</sup> McKelvey, "Early Library Developments," pp. 38-43; Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Association, *Catalogue of the Library* (Rochester, 1854).



win, and of course Carlyle, Emerson, and Poe, though neither Thoreau nor Whitman were included.<sup>113</sup>

In November, 1853, the committee announced a choice selection of lectures, featuring "aesthetic writers," "playful and sarcastic writers," notably George William Curtiss, "strong and earnest thinkers" such as Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker, with Oliver Wendell Holmes listed as a critic. The prize luminary was Professor Louis Agassiz, secured only at special expense, the report added.<sup>114</sup> Instead of a single lecture, as planned, Professor Agassiz remained in the city for several weeks in order to give an extended series of lectures on botany and geology.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately the January season did not encourage geological exploration, and the father of the glacial theory left Rochester without suspecting or enlarging upon that theory's special application to the lower Genesee area.<sup>116</sup> Emerson's address on "The Anglo-Saxon Race" in 1852 was similarly detached, as the anti-nativist *Union* hastened to make clear, yet it seemed especially fitting for that philosopher to deliver other lectures in Rochester on "Wealth" and "Culture."<sup>117</sup>

#### SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MATURITY

The years had in fact brought a sense of fullness in many aspects of Rochester's social and cultural life. Religious organizations and their affairs continued to exert the major influence, but foreign cultural contributions enjoyed increased importance, while the rising voice of women was heard. With the political arena full of aspiring journalists, some proclaimed varied causes, as in former days, but others were learning to straddle the fence. The arts as well as the sciences acquired reputé, and a wider variety of amusements appeared. In the world of the intellect, the city could point to at least one outstanding contribution during the early fifties. Thus a vital and mature cultural society emerged.

The establishment of a dozen new churches brought the total up to fifty by 1855, with the Methodists and especially the Catholics showing the most rapid gains. Except for the latter, the Presbyterians remained the most numerous, despite the friction which marked the formation of a new Old School synod in the Rochester area in 1851—an outgrowth

<sup>113</sup> *Catalogue of the Library* (1854).

<sup>114</sup> *Union*, Nov. 26, 1853.

<sup>115</sup> Rumor said that he had been asked not to speak against the Bible; see John W. Chadwick, *A Life for Liberty: Anti-Slavery and Other Letters of Sallie Holly* (New York, 1899), p. 135.

<sup>116</sup> *Union*, Jan. 12, 19, 1854; *Democrat*, Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 1, 1854. See above, pp. 4-7.

<sup>117</sup> *Democrat*, Feb. 6, 8, 1851; Feb. 5, 1852; *Union*, Nov. 30, 1852; Feb. 16, 22, 1855. Emerson delivered at least six lectures in Rochester during the early fifties; only the last of those mentioned has been published in full.

of the denominational split of 1837.<sup>118</sup> Whatever their disputes, none equalled the Presbyterians in prestige, though the Baptist divines connected with the university proved a great boon to that denomination. However, as the Presbyterians and the Baptists, as well as the Episcopalians, increased in sobriety and dignity, they lost some of their earlier ardor for converts. When Aristarchus Champion, whose benevolences were the marvel of the fifties, offered \$10,000 to the denomination that would build ten churches in the growing communities on the city's outskirts, it was the Methodists rather than his fellow Presbyterians who answered the challenge, planting four new churches in 1852 and increasing their parishes to eleven by 1855, when their total average attendance reached 2,745. The Catholic increase was still more rapid, with their average Sabbath attendance mounting to 10,750 in the latter year, when the total for all Protestant churches reporting reached only 11,320.<sup>119</sup>

The activities of the smaller and more dissident sects proved less conspicuous than formerly. The Unitarian Church became a center of reform under the ministry of William H. Channing, but its doctrines and those of the Universalists were no longer regarded as utter heresies by the more orthodox divines. Indeed Professor John H. Raymond, D.D., discussed his disagreement with Channing's transcendentalism daily over the dining table, apparently without serious friction.<sup>120</sup> The Jewish congregation, Berith Kodesh, achieving permanent organization, engaged as Rabbi, Marcus Tuska, whose son promptly won one of the three first scholarships at the University of Rochester and issued a small volume to explain the Hebrew ritual to strangers.<sup>121</sup> The Second Advent Church, with its predictions concerning the end of the world somewhat modified, assumed a more normal denominational role.<sup>122</sup> Even the Spiritualists, despite the transcription of lengthy messages from travelers in the spirit world, appeared to have reached the limits of their power, as the failure to disclose significant revelations deprived the mediums of their early

<sup>118</sup> *History of the Rochester Presbytery* (Rochester, 1899), pp. 31, 43-46. Albert G. Hall of Third Church assumed the lead in forming the "old school" Presbytery of Rochester City in 1851, while James B. Shaw of Brick Church gained national prominence in the New School Assemblies.

<sup>119</sup> Orlo J. Price, "Protestantism in Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, XII, 302; *N. Y. Census* (1855), pp. 445-476; *Advertiser*, Mar. 22, 1852. Champion's reputation for benevolence was somewhat tarnished in later years when many of his pledges were collected only by court order. See *Union and Advertiser*, Sept. 19, 1871.

<sup>120</sup> *Democrat*, July 28, 1852; *Union*, May 29, 1854; *Life and Letters of John Howard Raymond* (Rochester, 1881), p. 264; Octavius B. Frothingham, *Memoir of William Henry Channing* (Cambridge, 1886), pp. 241-242, 254-276.

<sup>121</sup> Simon Tuska, *The Stranger in the Synagogue* (Rochester, 1854); Rabbi Horace J. Wolf, "A History of the Jews of Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, II, 191-196; *An Outline History of the University of Rochester* (Rochester, 1886), p. 10.

<sup>122</sup> *Advent Harbinger*, June 8, Feb. 2, 1850.



notoriety. While old Abelard Reynolds and Isaac Post became absorbed with communications from the spirits, the Reverend William H. Channing explained the knockings and other local manifestations as a result of a combination of "odic-force, diabolism, and spiritual mediation."<sup>123</sup> Most Rochesterians continued about their mundane affairs.

Though the fires of religious emotionalism were brought under control, they continued to glow brightly in many places. The warm preaching of Dr. James B. Shaw made Brick Church the most vital among local Presbyterian parishes, sixty new members being confirmed at the close of his protracted meetings in the early spring of 1854.<sup>124</sup> Students in the Theological Seminary coöperated in evangelistic services at neighboring churches, yet one pious scholar, who declared, "I rise every morning at five, jump into a tub, attend morning prayers, and study the Bible 'till breakfast," felt impelled to pray for a revival at the college.<sup>125</sup> The emphasis of the newly appointed Professor Ezekiel G. Robinson, however, was on orthodox doctrine, and his lectures on Systematic Theology, whipped together in a study "strewn with books," encouraged an intellectual approach to religious problems. His special lecture series on Skepticism delivered at the First Baptist Church was said to have silenced the last Doubting Thomas.<sup>126</sup>

Some of the evangelistic energy thus conserved found expression in social and humanitarian movements. Temperance advocates redoubled their activities, organizing a new Temperance Alliance in 1852 to press for a Maine Law for New York State. The desirability of forming an independent party was considered, and meanwhile support was pledged to all candidates who promised to vote for a prohibition law. Ladies, urged to join the battle against the four hundred grog shops which "pour their poison into the city," formed a local Woman's Temperance Society at Rochester in August, 1851, to rally support for the law.<sup>127</sup> Though a League of Individualists organized to combat these more extreme measures, favoring temperance education and other means of mitigating the evil,<sup>128</sup> the now aging Jonathan Child and Ashbel Riley,

<sup>123</sup> Rev. C. Hammond, Medium, *The Pilgrimage of Thomas Paine and Others to the Seventh Circle in the Spirit World* (Rochester, 1852); *Democrat*, Apr. 13, 1853; *Union*, Mar. 24, 1854; Abelard Reynolds Papers, 1850-1856, MSS, Roch. Hist. Soc.; Frothingham, *William H. Channing*, pp. 272-276.

<sup>124</sup> *Union*, Apr. 3, 1854; Orlo J. Price, "The Life and Times of Brick Church," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 83-96.

<sup>125</sup> *Memoirs of Abner Kingman Nott* (New York, 1860), pp. 93-153, 211.

<sup>126</sup> E. H. Johnson, ed., *Ezekiel Gilman Robinson: An Autobiography* (New York, 1896), pp. 48-54.

<sup>127</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 31, 1851; Feb. 23, 1852; Apr. 24, 1853, *Rochester Temperance Journal*, Nov. 25, 1851, pp. 2-5.

<sup>128</sup> *Brown's Concordance of English and Scriptural Authority as to What is Temperance, with regard to the Use and not the Abuse of Alcoholic Beverage* (Rochester, 1852).

as well as young Susan B. Anthony, played leading roles in a state-wide prohibition campaign which helped to press the bill through the legislature. Much indignation was expressed in Rochester when the governor vetoed the measure.<sup>129</sup>

Perhaps the most noteworthy result of the temperance agitation was the increased activity of female reformers. Miss Anthony organized the first Woman's State Temperance Society at Rochester in April, 1852, and a convention was held at Syracuse the following year. When criticism greeted their efforts, several of these ladies became zealous feminists, staging a Woman's Rights Convention at Syracuse in September, 1852, and at Rochester a year later. The appearance of the new bloomer costume at the Syracuse convention elicited the ridicule of a Rochester editor, who soon noted the arrival of a bloomer girl on Exchange Street. Miss Anthony donned the garb early the next year, and controversy over the costume became so heated by the opening of the temperance convention that the main topic was largely neglected.<sup>130</sup> Though Lucy Stone, lecturing in Rochester that June, won the applause of former critics, and both men and women addressed lively sessions at a teachers' convention in the city that August, only the most forthright gentlemen, such as William H. Channing and Frederick Douglass, were willing to lend their support to the Woman's Rights Convention at Corinthian Hall in November.<sup>131</sup> Conservative women expressed disapproval of the "Female Garrisons," while Miss Antoinette Brown, born in near-by Henrietta and just back from Oberlin College, was personally ridiculed for presuming to interpret the Gospels.<sup>132</sup> Several able spokesmen emerged, however; Sarah R. Adamson graduated from the Central Medical College at Rochester in 1851, the second woman graduate in the country;<sup>133</sup> and the organization of a Sempstresses' Protective Association gave further evidence that the movement had a practical economic aspect as well. When Mrs. (Sarah Anthony) Burtis secured a position as clerk in a clothing store, and other young women appeared behind the counter in Jesse Hatch's shoe store, a new field of activity opened, greatly strengthening women's position in the community.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>129</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 7, 1853; Jan. 24, Mar. 27, Apr. 1, 1854.

<sup>130</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 19, 1852; Feb. 11, Mar. 29, 1853; *Union*, Sept. 2, 10, 11, Oct. 6, 9, Nov. 22, 1852; D. C. Bloomer, *Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer* (Boston, 1895), pp. 84-93; Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* (Indianapolis and Kansas City, 1899), I, 63-117.

<sup>131</sup> *Union*, June 7, Nov. 22, 1853; *Advertiser*, Aug. 12, 1853; *Democrat*, Dec. 1, 9, 12, 1853.

<sup>132</sup> *Democrat*, Mar. 29, June 2, Aug. 17, 1853; *Union*, May 14, 1853. Miss Brown gave up preaching to marry Dr. Samuel C. Blackwell in 1856. *D. A. B.*

<sup>133</sup> Betsy C. Corner, "Rochester's Early Medical School," *R. H. S., Pub.*, VII, 148-152.

<sup>134</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 7, 27, 1853; Peck's Scrapbook, p. 72.

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law roused the indignation of local humanitarians, attracting many of these same reformers into the campaign against slavery. Amy Post later reported that fugitive slaves passed through Rochester on the underground railway at a rate of 150 a year during the fifties.<sup>135</sup> Although no violent outbreak occurred in the city, Rochesterians were involved on both sides in the famous Jerry rescue at Syracuse, one returning with a broken arm. The Whig *Democrat* staunchly defended the rescuers, while the *Advertiser* deplored the action of the "mobocrats."<sup>136</sup> Tempers were restrained, but sharp differences of opinion appeared between the local colonization society, which included many substantial citizens such as Freeman Clarke, the local Garrisonians, notably William Bloss and Isaac Post, and supporters of political action, led by Samuel D. Porter.<sup>137</sup>

When a convention of colored folk met at Rochester in 1852, opposition to both colonization and Garrisonianism, or Northern secession, appeared. Frederick Douglass, who now joined the political faction, bringing the influence of his paper to the cause,<sup>138</sup> advocated industrial training for colored men, while Julia Griffiths, his editorial assistant, took a leading part in the Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, which conducted an active lecture program. William H. Channing made the Unitarian Church available for meetings, and many were held in Corinthian Hall, where Douglass and Channing, as well as numerous outsiders, spoke on frequent occasions. The American Anti-Slavery Society held its annual convention of 1852 in that capacious hall. Fair-sized audiences generally responded, and the ladies raised as much as \$500 at their antislavery fairs, yet the issue did not disturb the great majority.<sup>139</sup>

Both the *Advertiser* and the *Union* deprecated the more radical outbursts, while local politicians belittled the Free Soil party, which polled only 223 votes at Rochester in 1852.<sup>140</sup> Increased interest was aroused by the Kansas question, but again the idealists, Samuel D. Porter and William C. Bloss, proved chiefly concerned. When both Henry E. Peck,

<sup>135</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 18, 1852; Nov. 22, Dec. 3, 1853; Joseph B. Bloss, "The Underground Railroad or Railway," MS in William C. Bloss Autograph Folder, Roch. Hist. Soc.; William S. Falls, "A Few Leaves from the Diary of an Underground Railroad Conductor," in *Democrat & Chronicle*, June 20, 1881; Amy Post, "The Underground Railway," in Peck, *History of Rochester*, pp. 458-462; Elijah Huftelen, *Lights on the Underground Railway* (LeRoy, N. Y., 1902).

<sup>136</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 3, 1851; *Advertiser*, Oct. 3, 1851.

<sup>137</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 3, 1851; Freeman Clarke, Autograph Letters, 1853-1854; Amy H. Coughton, "Anti-Slavery Days in Rochester," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 131-141.

<sup>138</sup> *Democrat*, July 9, 11, 1853; *Union*, May 3, 1853; F. M. Howland, *Frederick Douglass: The Colored Orator* (New York, 1895), pp. 220-223.

<sup>139</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Oration Delivered in Corinthian Hall* (Rochester, 1852); Julia Griffiths, ed., *Autographs for Freedom* (Rochester, 1854), pp. 11-15, 225-230; *Union*, May 7, Nov. 11, 14, 1853; Dec. 19, 1854.

<sup>140</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 15, 1852; *Union*, Sept. 1, 3, 1853; June 11, July 6, 1854.

the liberal Oberlinite, and William H. Channing, the Unitarian transcendentalist, resigned their charges, the cause of reform in Rochester was seriously retarded.<sup>141</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, attracted some attention, though the Orion Debating Society condemned its inflammatory tone. While the Rochester theater ventured to bill a performance by Colonel G. L. Aiken, no one took the trouble to add a copy of the novel to the library collection.<sup>142</sup> The issue disturbed old party alignments, but the efforts of the *Democrat* to unite the Seward-Whigs and Free Soil Democrats behind a moderately anti-slavery program were frustrated as the rival Whig journal, the *American*, successfully persuaded the conservative majority to stake their prospects on the nativism of the Know-Nothing faction.

The resurgent nativism of the mid-fifties appeared at first as a strange anomaly in a city enjoying increased benefits from skilled immigrants and a measure of social maturity. Yet, viewed in its setting, the moderation of the local Know-Nothing movement was a clear manifestation of these very trends. The striking growth of the Catholic churches, appearing as a dangerous challenge to many Protestants, prompted Henry W. Lee to deliver two sermons on Papal aggression at St. Luke's in 1851, to which Bishop Timon replied at St. Patrick's. Leading clerics in other parts of the country were similarly engaged, but the more violent conflicts which resulted in many cities were noticeably absent in Rochester.<sup>143</sup> The Monroe County Bible Society, renewing its efforts to place a Bible in every home, visited, in the course of a thorough campaign, 1976 Catholic families, 65 per cent of whom refused to accept Bibles. A reorganized Rochester Agency of the American Tract Society engaged a visiting agent who labored diligently, emphasizing in his report the work among German and Irish Catholic immigrants, but again such visits represented barely one-ninth of the total.<sup>144</sup> These efforts, naturally resented by local Catholics (as was the exclusion of their services from the Home for the Friendless), appeared as mild contrasts to the mobs which frequently attacked Catholic churches in other communities during these years, while the bolder propaganda devices of the American and Foreign Christian Union were neglected in Rochester.<sup>145</sup>

When a split in the Democratic party made the "Silver Grey" Whig,

<sup>141</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 16, 1852; May 16, 30, 1854; *Union*, July 22, 1854.

<sup>142</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 10, 1852; Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics' Association, *Catalogue of the Library* (Rochester, 1854).

<sup>143</sup> Henry W. Lee, *Papal Aggression* (Rochester, 1851); *Advertiser*, May 5, Dec. 3, 1851, Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, pp. 262-380.

<sup>144</sup> Monroe County Bible Society, "Record Book," pp. 69-81, MS, Rochester Historical Society; Rochester Agency of the American Tract Society, *Second Annual Report* (Rochester, 1855).

<sup>145</sup> F. J. Zwierlein, "The Rise of Religious Liberty in the Institutions of Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, VI, 201-205.

Dr. Maltby Strong, mayor in the spring of 1854, despite a bare 36 per cent of the vote, a new issue was required to insure reelection. Dr. Strong officiated at a local rally of the newly organized Know Nothing society a few months later, thus revealing his affiliation, yet Rochester escaped most of the anti-Catholic policies so widely applied elsewhere that year.<sup>146</sup> A police guard attended the Angel Gabriel, an itinerant anti-Catholic street preacher, on the occasion of his visit in July, yet the crowds that followed proved too amused to indulge in the rioting the Angel's provocative blasts so frequently incited elsewhere.<sup>147</sup>



Despite the sober character of the social issues back of the political struggles of the day, the major result of successive party contests was the diversion afforded both to toil-weary residents and to script-hungry editors. Indeed, local political opinion exerted less effect on the community's development than did a variety of new amusements which served to enrich the social life of the average citizen. Domestic comforts were increasingly enjoyed by the rising middle class, and a reasonable proportion of the new arrivals from abroad found agreeable places in the community.

Amidst a confused array of disjointed issues and factional cliques, local as well as state and national party ties began to loosen and the periodic battles lost some of their earlier bitterness. Alvah Strong and his *Democrat*, despite antislavery leanings, continued to uphold the regular Whig banner and supplied the main support for the faction known as the "Woolies," whose local chief was Lewis Selye. The *American*, attempting to follow a noncommittal attitude toward slavery and most other issues (excepting nativism), represented the "Silver Gray" faction which sought to preserve party ties with Southern Whigs. The impulsive Isaac Butts, an outspoken "Barnburner," having resumed control of the *Advertiser* in 1849, sold it again at the end of 1850 to Thomas Hyatt, the earlier "Hunker" editor now back from a consulship at Amoy, China. Free for a time from the squabble over either state or national patronage, a spirit of harmony animated local Democrats as they sought to consolidate their forces.<sup>148</sup>

While the Democrats made the stronger appeal to workingmen and naturalized voters, the Whigs found their chief support among the more stable members of the middle class, advocates of a Maine Law to control the liquor traffic. The latter profited by their Albany record for canal improvements, though all Democrats in Rochester ardently favored the

<sup>146</sup> Scisco, *Political Nativism*, pp. 84-132, 203-210; *Union*, June 21, 29, Aug. 5, 25, 28, 1854.

<sup>147</sup> *Union*, June 7, 21, July 14, 28, 31, Aug. 1, 11, 1854; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, pp. 305-306, 319, 380-405.

<sup>148</sup> *Democrat*, Jan. 1, 1851; *Advertiser*, June 7, 1852; *Union*, Sept. 14, Oct. 21, 1852; Peck, *History of Rochester*, pp. 347-348.

canal's enlargement, directing their complaints solely against the shady contracts let by Whig canal commissioners. The Barnburners, however, did not like the temperance leanings of local Hunkers and demanded both more tolerance for immigrants and less tolerance for Southern slaveholders. Yet, despite their divergent opinions, most of the leaders of these several factions were close associates in the newly established telegraph companies as well as in other community enterprises.<sup>149</sup>

When in the election of 1852 local political spokesmen found themselves pledged to national candidates or platforms with which they had little sympathy, the result was a wordy fisticuffs. The Democrats, organizing Granite clubs, erected Hickory poles for Pierce of New Hampshire, but their general confidence in Horatio Seymour, the candidate for governor, did not extend to the national ticket.<sup>150</sup> The Whigs formed Scott clubs and tried to forget the platform's endorsement of the fugitive slave law.<sup>151</sup> The high point in the campaign was General Scott's visit to Rochester that October, but his speech before a throng, estimated by his friends to number twenty-five thousand (but placed at two thousand by the *Union*), was not a strong one. Indeed the introduction (in which Scott confessed that two questions were suggested by the vast crowd before him, "Where am I?" and "Who am I?") afforded the *Advertiser* much amusement.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, the Whigs won again, delivering Rochester's vote to Scott with a 1153 majority, though the Democrats, who carried the Irish-dominated Fifth Ward and the German-dominated Sixth and Ninth Wards, were able to celebrate state and national victories.<sup>153</sup>

Occasional visits by national political leaders presented agreeable opportunities for the expression of the community's hardy democracy. President Fillmore stopped at Rochester in the course of his tour of 1851, while Daniel Webster, unable or unwilling to keep up with the presidential party, arrived a few weeks later. Professor Raymond, indignant at the betrayal of Northern principles in the Compromise of the previous year, refused to permit Webster to address the University students, but an eager crowd gathered to hear him speak from the balcony of the Arcade.<sup>154</sup> Stephen Douglas arrived later that year to address the

<sup>149</sup> The intricate shifts in Democratic politics within the state are clearly set forth in Stewart Mitchell's *Horatio Seymour*, pp. 111-168. See also Philip S. Foner, *Business and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1941), pp. 1-139, for an interesting study of these warring factions in New York City.

<sup>150</sup> *Advertiser*, June 7, Sept. 16, Oct. 25, 1852.

<sup>151</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 4, 6, 1852.

<sup>152</sup> *Democrat*, Oct. 16, 1852; *Advertiser*, Oct. 16, 1852.

<sup>153</sup> *Democrat*, Nov. 4, 11, 12, 1852; *Union*, Nov. 4, 11, 1852. As noted above, the Democrats likewise won in local elections until 1854.

<sup>154</sup> *Democrat*, May 21, 24, 1851; *Advertiser*, Apr. 2, May 24, 1851; Samuel C. Pierce, "Three Famous Visitors to Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, III, 229-231; E. R. Foreman, "Daniel Webster in Rochester," *R. H. S., Pub.*, III, 243-252.



State Agricultural Fair.<sup>155</sup> With members of all parties generally attending such affairs, a spirit of good humor characterized most contests. Thus the newly established *Union* forgot its hostility to the agitation for women's rights long enough in 1852 to report that seven-eighths of the ladies polled on the election favored the bachelor Pierce over General Scott.<sup>156</sup>

Much of the harmony of the early fifties disappeared in 1853 when the spirit of nativism and national differences over the slave question became more acute. The *Union*, under the vigorous direction of Isaac Butts after December, 1852, became the most forthright of all local papers, especially in its attack on the nativist sentiments of the *American* and Mayor Strong when revealed as a Know-Nothing late in 1854. The visit of Cardinal Bedini in the course of his American tour was favorably reported by this now "Soft Shell" Democratic journal, which held the constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and assembly applicable even to Catholics and immigrants.<sup>157</sup> Alvah Strong in the *Democrat* became more ardent in his support of temperance as well as more alarmed about bleeding Kansas. Yet the *Advertiser*, expressing its moderate opposition to excessive drinking, its moderate desire to curb the extension of slavery, its moderate friendship toward immigrants, proved in the long run most nearly in agreement with the general sentiment (if not the politics) of the community, which was at last outgrowing its period of youthful fanaticism.<sup>158</sup>

Less pretentious activities likewise afforded opportunity for expression and diversion, notably the visits of three or four circus companies each year. Barnum's Menagerie, the Welch Circus, the animal parade of Sands and Quick, as well as the noted clown, Dan Rice, returned again and again, attracting crowds of twenty-five hundred a day into their "canvas pavilions" at Falls Field, overlooking the main falls, or at the fair grounds south of the city.<sup>159</sup> Frequent parades by the

<sup>155</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 20, 1851.

<sup>156</sup> *Union*, Sept. 17, Oct. 15, 1852; *Advertiser*, Oct. 15, 1852.

<sup>157</sup> *Democrat*, Dec. 28, 1852; Jan. 4, 21, 1853; *Union*, Oct. 28, 1853; June 1, 21, Aug. 5, 25, 28, 1854.

<sup>158</sup> *Union*, Aug. 5, 28, 1854; Mar. 1, Apr. 26, 30, May 2, July 19, Sept. 19, 1855. Perhaps never again would such excesses as Antimasonry, Pioneerism, and nativism dominate the community. This record, of course, implied more than increased "maturity," for a fortuitous absence of sudden and drastic population or cultural shifts has saved Rochester from the more violent social upheavals which occasionally marred the history of other "mature" cities. Several decades later when the economic struggle between organized capital and organized labor became acute, critical situations developed, but Rochester, which has frequently been characterized as staid and conservative, successfully weathered the successive storms with a minimum of violence and disorder.

<sup>159</sup> *Democrat*, July 8, Sept. 17, 1851, Aug. 17, 1853; *Advertiser*, Aug. 18, 1851, July 25, 1853; *Union*, Sept. 9, 1854.

military companies, the firemen, or one of the immigrant groups welcomed a visiting company or commemorated some special event. Two or more local bands and occasionally musicians from a neighboring town generally contributed to such festivities. The Fourth of July had already become a regular civic festival, yet S. C. Williams added a new feature in 1854 when he hung a "flag of all nations" from the roof of his store across the line of march on Buffalo Street.<sup>160</sup> None of these celebrations, however, could compare with the fair held by the New York State Agricultural Society at Rochester in September, 1851. With the throngs crowding the city on that occasion said to number 100,000, local observers could not adequately express their delight.<sup>161</sup>

Outdoor sports steadily gained in popularity. The Rochester Union Course, opening regularly in May, presented frequent attractions, including Derbys in which purses ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 were occasionally at stake.<sup>162</sup> The two local cricket clubs continued active, contesting with clubs from Syracuse, Geneseo, Buffalo, and even from Canada across the lake. Dissatisfaction with the performance of the local teams, prompted by a series of defeats in 1851 and 1853, disappeared the next year when a string of victories occurred.<sup>163</sup> The Sportsmen's Club repeated earlier excursions to Charlotte to shoot pigeons during their migrating season, and young Seth Green, "a crack shot," brought down 900 in one day.<sup>164</sup> Though sailboat racing had become popular on the Finger Lakes, apparently the only boat races in the Rochester area were spontaneous affairs staged by rival canal boat captains, yet these contests frequently proved entertaining enough to the numerous idlers usually hanging over the rail of "Loafer's Bridge" at Child's Basin.<sup>165</sup>

Amusements of the less formal sort included picnicking on Falls Field or in Mount Hope Cemetery, a steamboat ride to Cobourg across the lake, a fishing excursion on Irondequoit Bay, or a trip to a nearby mineral bath resort. Improvements at the Avon Springs prompted many to take the stage which ran daily between the city and that increasingly popular watering place. If the sulphur water there did not provide satisfaction, six other springs in the county were available, each equipped with a hotel or bath house fitted with sweating boxes.<sup>166</sup> The first record of adult bathing in the lake appeared in 1853 when a correspondent of

<sup>160</sup> *Union*, July 5, 1854; J. T. Andrews, *Weather Book*, Sept. 10, 1851.

<sup>161</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 18, 20, 1851; N. Y. State Agricultural Society, *Transactions*, XI (1851), 16-25, 108.

<sup>162</sup> *Advertiser*, Aug. 8, 11, 1851; May 28, July 2, Aug. 10, 1853.

<sup>163</sup> *Union*, Sept. 4, 1852; Aug. 18, 1854; *Advertiser*, July 1, Sept. 1, 1853.

<sup>164</sup> *Advertiser*, Apr. 29, 1852; *Union*, July 8, 1854; *D. A. B.*, VII, 558.

<sup>165</sup> *Democrat*, June 15, 1853; E. Scrantom, "Old Citizen's Letters," p. 56.

<sup>166</sup> John Bell, *The Mineral and Thermal Springs of the United States and Canada* (Philadelphia, 1855), pp. 98-114.



the *Democrat*, observing over one hundred men and women in the water near Charlotte during the "melting season," suggested the propriety of erecting tents as more convenient than closed carriages for dressing.<sup>167</sup> An earlier heat wave that summer had prompted several "overgrown loafers" to "bathe in a state of nudity at midday in the river just above the Aqueduct," but the authorities were soon called on to enforce the ordinance against that practice.<sup>168</sup>

Apparently the authorities were becoming lax in the enforcement of other regulations against improper diversions. A "disgraceful scene" was noted one Sabbath afternoon "a stone's throw" from the new Plymouth Church, as a group of men and boys gathered to watch a cockfight. "Where was the new police?" asked the editor of the *Union*, who noted on another occasion: "Yesterday was an unusually quiet Sabbath. There was no person in the Watch House or City Prison during the day, and not a call was made for Police assistance."<sup>169</sup> The editor quite properly suspected that the absence of police calls did not necessarily prove that Rochester had become a happily law-abiding community, and the number of unlicensed grog shops and illegal gaming rooms bore him out.<sup>170</sup> Doubtless the good folk of the city were not aware of a small publication issued at New York in May, 1853, which advised visitors to the Flour City of "a very private place" near the canal where "old mother Chapman . . . keeps three girls and you will receive good treatment," but warned against Corn Hill, which "is a bad place."<sup>171</sup>

There was no doubt in many minds concerning the evil character of the newer social trends. Ladies were advised to give less attention to idle fashion and cease attempting to ape the practices and don the garb of their menfolk, for the duties of the home were being neglected.<sup>172</sup> The youth of the day presented perplexing problems as, freed from domestic chores, they thronged the byways, playing idle pranks and otherwise disturbing the community.<sup>173</sup> An oversupply of stray dogs roamed the streets, while crowds of loafers hanging around the corner taverns frequently "compelled ladies to cross the street in order to get by."<sup>174</sup> The old solution of passing a new ordinance no longer appeared to suffice, and while many sighed for the good old days, William H. Channing delivered a lecture before the Athenaeum on the timely theme, "In Defense of Popular Amusements."<sup>175</sup>

<sup>167</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 18, 1853.

<sup>169</sup> *Union*, Jan. 30, May 16, 1854.

<sup>168</sup> *Union*, June 16, 1853.

<sup>170</sup> Senate Doc. (1855), III, 79.

<sup>171</sup> [H. D. Eastman], *Fast Man's Directory, and Lover's Guide to the Ladies of Fashion and Houses of Pleasure in New York and Other Large Cities*, by the Ladies Man (New York, 1853), p. 23.

<sup>172</sup> *Union*, Sept. 2, 10, Oct. 6, 1852.

<sup>173</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 9, 1853; see above, pp. 337, 343.

<sup>174</sup> *Union*, Feb. 28, Mar. 24, 1854.

<sup>175</sup> *Union*, Dec. 12, 1853.

Fortunately, progress in the organization of societies was filling the latent social needs of various citizens. Though many sober citizens frowned on the social influences of the eleven fire companies and six military companies active in 1853, such organizations provided useful roles to several hundred young men. Nine lodges of Odd Fellows (including the first in the country to admit wives), two "tents" of the Independent Order of Redmen, and four Masonic lodges supplied fraternal associations to numerous male citizens, despite continued criticism of secret oaths. Three societies of the Sons of Temperance, two lodges of the Independent Order of Good Samaritans, several bands and other musical organizations, the German Turner societies and the Scottish St. Andrew's Society, as well as half a dozen benevolent associations formed by various groups of mechanics, afforded social opportunities in line with their functions.<sup>176</sup>

None of these societies rivalled the numerous religious organizations in the extent of their influence, and no one compared with the Athenaeum and Mechanics' Association, the leading organization in the city. Yet it must have been an agreeable comfort to Patrick Gavin to have the United Benevolent Trade Society of Journeyman Tailors, to which he belonged, turn out "in full regalia" for the funeral of his wife.<sup>177</sup> Similar values were derived from many of these societies, approximately a third of them organized in the early fifties, while others were soon to be formed as the trend toward an institutionalized and citified social life gained momentum.



But it was in the more strictly cultural fields that Rochester most nearly approached urban maturity. The reputable standing of music and painting was at last acquired in a measure by the theater, though the growing patronage of the arts and of literature as well did not make them very secure sources for a livelihood. Yet a considerable group of intellectuals was emerging, supported by the churches, the university, or a comfortable legal practice, and noteworthy individuals among them proved worthy of comparison with their contemporaries elsewhere.

Rochester was already gaining a reputation for its musical facilities. Locally favored church soloists, such as Marion McGregor, Julia Hill, Addison Gardiner, Frederick F. Backus, and Nathaniel T. Rochester of the earlier days were now supported in choirs trained by Robert Barron, James Murray, or other modestly paid organists. The first boys' choir appeared at St. Paul's in 1851. The Harmonic Society, reorganized in

<sup>176</sup> *Rochester Directory* (1853-54), pp. 33-34; *Proceedings of a Convention of Masonic Lodges in Middle and Western New York at Rochester, September 2nd 1853* (Rochester, 1853); J. W. Stebbins, *The Half-Century History of Rebecca Odd-Fellowship 1851-1901* (n.p., 1901), pp. 9-19. See above, p. 306.

<sup>177</sup> *Union*, Sept. 10, 1852.

1852, maintained both an orchestra and a chorus, while numerous German singing societies preceded the formation of the Maennerchor in 1854, destined to a long and creditable career.<sup>178</sup> Among several bands, that organized by Alexander Scott proved the most successful, numbering eighteen well-coördinated players and holding them together for a full decade. Scott's Band played from the balcony of Blossom's Hotel three evenings a week during the summer of 1853, attracting crowds in the street below, while Concert, Minerva, Corinthian, and three lesser halls were frequently in use.<sup>179</sup> Annual musical conventions met at Corinthian Hall during these years, carrying on the tradition of the earlier Music Institutes, and staged concerts that displayed a wide range of talent.<sup>180</sup>

Of course these as yet modest local developments were overshadowed by the display of visiting talent at Corinthian Hall, where the distinguished artists then beginning to tour the country held forth. The month of July, 1851, must have afforded delight to local feminists as well as music lovers, with Mesdames Anna Bishop, Teresa Parodi, and Amalia Strakosch following each other in quick succession,<sup>181</sup> only to be forgotten in turn on the arrival of Jenny Lind near the end of the month. The great throng that gathered to see and hear the Swedish Nightingale paid tribute to Barnum's clever showmanship (which extracted \$2,600 from the pockets of those attending the second concert, though a portion of the proceeds was turned over to a local charity), but sizable audiences heard later recitals by Ole Bull and Madam Emma Bostwick among others; in 1853 the community enjoyed its first opera.<sup>182</sup> A more boisterous enthusiasm greeted successive minstrel companies. The repeated performances of Campbell's Minstrels during the summer of 1853 won a following that brought the troupe back in subsequent years.<sup>183</sup>

Although local and visiting artists did not enjoy the generous patronage accorded musicians, their work was increasingly in evidence and highly prized. Grove S. Gilbert painted at least a score of his fellow citizens during the period, while Colby Kimball, similarly engaged, soon had his numerous portraits of the pioneers ready for exhibit in a Gallery of Western New York adjacent to John Kelsey's Emporium of Art in

<sup>178</sup> R. H. Lansing, "Music in Rochester from 1817 to 1909," R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 146-148, 163-168.

<sup>179</sup> Lansing, "Music in Rochester," pp. 149-152; *Democrat*, Apr. 2, 28, Aug. 31, Dec. 24, 1853.

<sup>180</sup> Lansing, "Music in Rochester," p. 169; see above, p. 309.

<sup>181</sup> *Nat. Cyc. Am. Biog.*, III, 289; *International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, pp. 1364, 1372.

<sup>182</sup> Lansing, "Music in Rochester," pp. 143-145; *Advertiser*, July 23, 1851; *Democrat*, Oct. 8, 1853; Andrews Weather Book, July 23-26, 1851, *passim*.

<sup>183</sup> *Democrat*, Aug. 25, Sept. 13, 1851; Sept. 22, 1852; *Advertiser*, Apr. 29, 1852, May 27, Aug. 17, 1853.

the Gaffrey Block.<sup>184</sup> Extensive panoramas of the Mississippi Valley, Solomon's Judgment, the Garden of Eden, and the Holy Land were exhibited for a small charge at the Arcade or Concert Hall, and a number of oil paintings were displayed at the latter place for several weeks prior to their public sale.<sup>185</sup> Henry J. Brent, soon to marry the daughter of Dr. F. F. Backus and become illustrator of the *Knickerbocker Magazine*,<sup>186</sup> delivered a public lecture on the fine arts, while art classes accommodated adults as well as academy girls. The popular desire for a likeness of one's parents kept the two galleries of Kelsey's Daguerrian Palace busy and supported several lesser establishments.<sup>187</sup> Plans for a full-fledged Gallery of Fine Arts were formulated in 1854, but the charter secured by Levi A. Ward, Roswell Hart, and several others was permitted to lapse.<sup>188</sup> J. W. Hill's "View of Rochester in 1853," produced as a large lithograph by a New York firm, attracted considerable attention, though the *Union* regretted the artist's failure to depict the "animated mass of moving men and animals, too numerous to count . . . [which] Buffalo and Main Streets . . . almost any day present for the distance of a mile or two."<sup>189</sup>

The Rochester theater, already fairly well established in the late forties, continued to share with Buffalo the services of the stock company managed by Carr and Warren. Leading stars occasionally joined the troupe for a few performances, and Charlotte Cushman arrived for a ten-day engagement in various Shakespearean roles in February, 1852.<sup>190</sup> When, the next year, a second Buffalo theater manager, Charles T. Smith, joined forces with Carr and Warren, the theater in the Stone Block was remodeled and enlarged. The new Metropolitan Theater, as it was called, opened a season in June that lasted eight months without a break.<sup>191</sup> The council had somewhat modified its earlier attitude of restraint, providing short term licenses for transient players.<sup>192</sup> But the opening of the new theater with a performance of "The Honeymoon, or How to Rule a Wife" prompted the Reverend J. H. McIlvain to deliver a strong sermon at First Church, in which the influences of the theater

<sup>184</sup> Clifford M. Ulp, "Art and Artists," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XIV, 30-33, 54-60.

<sup>185</sup> *Advertiser*, July 15, Aug. 5, Oct. 10, 1851; Mar. 15, 1853; *Union*, Dec. 28, 1852, June 1, 1854; *Catalogue of the Large Collection of Splendid Modern European Oil Paintings* (Rochester, 1852).

<sup>186</sup> *Union*, Jan. 10, Feb. 21, 1854; *Union and Advertiser*, July 6, 1857; *Nat. Cyc. Am. Biog.*, XIII, 207.

<sup>187</sup> *Union*, May 30, 1853; Mar. 28, May 31, 1854; *Post Express*, Oct. 20, 1894.

<sup>188</sup> Ulp, "Art and Artists," p. 41.

<sup>189</sup> *Union*, Apr. 26, 1853.

<sup>190</sup> *Democrat*, Sept. 5, 1851; Feb. 16, 1852; *Advertiser*, Feb. 17, Dec. 1, 16, 1852.

<sup>191</sup> *Union*, Dec. 28, 1852; June 21, 24, 1853; N. E. Bitz, "A Half-Century of Theater in Early Rochester," pp. 108-120, M.A. thesis, Univ. of Syracuse, type-script in Roch. Pub. Library.

<sup>192</sup> *Advertiser*, Dec. 21, 1851.

were roundly condemned.<sup>193</sup> It was permissible, nevertheless, for even the most respectable to attend a reading of "Hamlet" at Corinthian Hall, and when "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and "Women's Rights in 1853" were presented at the Metropolitan, sympathetic reformers began to accept the additional task of defending the theater.<sup>194</sup> Staunch support came likewise from the editor of the *Union*, for this proved another instance in which Isaac Butts differed strongly with Alvah Strong of the *Democrat*.<sup>195</sup> After a brief respite, Smith opened a spring season which continued with success until fall, when Carr again took over, presenting an Italian Opera Company, followed by a Parisian ballet troupe. An exceptional fare was thus presented, though the response at the ticket office may have accounted for the frequent reorganizations which started a rumor that Rochester was too puritanical to support a theater. Butts of the *Union* stoutly denied the charge, but there could be no doubt of the city's moderation in such matters.<sup>196</sup>

Rochester enjoyed a much fuller expression in the field of print, though few local publications had literary pretensions. In addition to four well-printed and ably-edited dailies, and their weekly and semi-weekly supplements, at least a dozen other weekly and monthly publications appeared in Rochester during the four-year period. The *Genesee Farmer* retained its outstanding character, while *Moore's Rural New Yorker*, established in 1850 by a former editor of the *Farmer*, supplied creditable articles on all subjects of interest to rural readers. The *Horticulturalist*, published in Rochester during 1853 and 1854, aimed at a more specialized audience, as did the *Genesee Evangelist*, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, the *Advent Harbinger*, and the *Star of Temperance*, small propaganda sheets with varied objectives. Inspired by the success of the *Rural New Yorker*, another semi-literary magazine was established to serve up-state towns and cities, but the *New York Magazine*, as it was named, soon experienced the fate of other ephemeral publications.<sup>197</sup> Meanwhile, the establishment of the *Beobacter am Genesee* by G. H. Hass and H. Blauw in 1851 marked the beginning in Rochester of a long but continuous line of German language newspapers.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>193</sup> *Union*, June 28, July 5, 1853; *Advertiser*, Jan. 8, Mar. 4, 1853; *Democrat*, Aug. 30, 1853.

<sup>194</sup> *Union*, Dec. 2, 3, 27, 1853; Julia Griffiths, *Autographs for Freedom*, pp. 210-224.

<sup>195</sup> *Union*, Sept. 7, 8, 9, 13, 1853.

<sup>196</sup> *Advertiser*, Jan. 9, 1857; Bitz, "Theater in Early Rochester," pp. 120-126.

<sup>197</sup> The *New York Magazine* (Rochester, 1853); *Rochester Directory* (1851-52), p. 45; (1853-54), pp. 51-53; N. Y. *Census* (1855), p. 484, Harriett J. Naylor, "Rochester's Agricultural Press. A Mirror of Genesee Country Life," R. H. S., *Pub.*, XVIII, 196-199.

<sup>198</sup> See the file of the *Beobacter* and its successors in the office of the present Rochester *Abenpost*.

The leading publishers were turning out at the same time a creditable list of books and pamphlets. A dozen sermons comprised the largest category among the fifty-odd pamphlets of less than one hundred pages, while four lengthy transcriptions of messages from the spirit world proved the most voluminous among the thirty-four books.<sup>199</sup> Several of the latter were republications of volumes written and first printed elsewhere, but at least five books of merit, one of them a contribution of outstanding distinction, comprised the work of local authors. Patrick Barry's *The Fruit Garden* was a useful treatment of a subject increasingly important to the area, and Barry's practical knowledge as a leading nurseryman, as well as his editorial skill displayed on both the *Farmer* and the *Horticulturalist*, contributed to the merits of his book.<sup>200</sup> John Kelsey's *Lives and Reminiscences of the Pioneers of Western New York* provided biographical data respecting the individuals included in Colby Kimball's collection of pioneer portraits.<sup>201</sup> A much more extensive effort at compiling the region's historic lore was represented in Orsamus Turner's *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase*. The work started by O'Reilly more than a decade before, here reached completion, and while Turner's failure to integrate the rich material was noticeable throughout, as well as his moderate literary abilities, at least a real service in the preservation of hundreds of valuable reminiscences and records otherwise lost to Turner's successors was performed.<sup>202</sup>

E. Peshine Smith's *Political Economy*, though not published in Rochester, was a suggestive discussion of some of Henry C. Carey's theories respecting individual enterprise and economic nationalism by a brilliant young attorney of Rochester.<sup>203</sup> But the most distinguished intellectual contribution was made by another lawyer, Lewis Henry Morgan, who had located at Rochester in the mid-forties. Morgan's *League of the Iroquois*, later described by a competent authority as "the first scientific account of an Indian tribe ever given to the world," was chiefly valuable for its thoughtful analysis of the tribal organization and customs of the area's former lords. Aided greatly by his friendship

<sup>199</sup> E. R. Foreman, "Check List of Rochester Publications," R. H. S., *Pub.*, V, 222-234.

<sup>200</sup> Barry, *The Fruit Garden*.

<sup>201</sup> John Kelsey, *The Lives and Reminiscences of the Pioneers of Rochester and Western New York* (Rochester, 1854).

<sup>202</sup> Two editions were published, one in 1851 with a Supplement on "Monroe County and the Northern Portion of Morris' Reserve" and the second in 1852 with a Supplement on Ontario, Wayne, Livingston, Yates, and Allegany counties. Both were published by William Alling and represented a total of 720 pages of material, not counting the section reprinted in the second edition.

<sup>203</sup> E. P. Smith, *A Manual of Political Economy* (New York, 1853); E. P. Smith was a son of Erasmus D. Smith, and married a distant relation of the Rochester family.



with the gifted young Sachem, Ely S. Parker, who located at Rochester in 1850, Morgan thus dramatically launched his career as a careful student of human society, a career which was to gain him recognition as the "Father of American Anthropology."<sup>204</sup>

Fresh stimulus was imparted to these intellectual stirrings by the youthful University and the Theological Seminary. A heated debate over the proper location for the permanent buildings was in process, with advocates of Brown's Square, the Boody farm, and the Pinnacle Hills each claiming superior advantages.<sup>205</sup> The authorities at both institutions were more immediately concerned, however, over their inadequate funds; fortunately the situation was sufficiently relieved to permit an advance in the salaries of full professors from \$1200 to \$1400 in 1853. The theology students coöperated one day in unloading the canal boat which brought the famous Neander collection, purchased with the aid of a special gift, but the number of scholars able to use these heavy German tomes was small, and the Seminary as well as the University lacked funds for other library acquisitions.<sup>206</sup> Yet an able group of professors gathered, and in 1853 the trustees announced the appointment of Dr. Martin B. Anderson, former editor of the Baptist *New York Recorder*, as the University's first president. Dr. Anderson (described by Professor Raymond as "a strong and able man, and certainly conservative enough, even for a college president, which is saying a good deal, you know") delivered an inaugural address in staunch defense of the traditional brand of "Liberal Education," thus checking the trend evident among the early founders who were interested in broader concepts of practical and scientific education.<sup>207</sup>

A choice society of scholars was emerging, adding luster to the social refinement of the Third Ward. Miss Porter's boarding house at 10 South Sophia Street sheltered a brilliant coterie in 1853 when Professors Raymond and Kendrick and the Reverend William H. Channing, as regular members of the household, entertained many of the city's distinguished visitors, notably George William Curtis, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry

<sup>204</sup> Stern, *Lewis Henry Morgan*, pp. 19-36, 62-72; Charles A. Dewey, "Sketches of the Life of Lewis H. Morgan with Personal Reminiscences," R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 29-45; also miscellaneous articles on Morgan and a bibliography of his publications, R. H. S., *Pub.*, II, 2-97; "Ely S. Parker," *Nat. Cyc. Am. Biog.*, V, 330. See above, pp. 319-320.

<sup>205</sup> *Democrat*, Apr. 14, 27, 29, 1853.

<sup>206</sup> *Union*, Oct. 13, 1852; *Assembly Doc.* (1851), III, No. 68; Rosenberger, *Rochester, the Making of a University*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>207</sup> *Life and Letters of John H. Raymond*, p. 301; Asahel C. Kendrick, *Martin B. Anderson, LL.D.: A Biography* (Philadelphia, 1895), pp. 123-127; William C. Morey, "The University of Rochester in its Relation to the Educational Movement of the Last Fifty Years," *The Semi-centennial Anniversary of the Founding of the University of Rochester* (Rochester, 1900), pp. 56-60.

Ward Beecher, Horace Mann, Bronson Alcott, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, among many others.<sup>208</sup> It was a delightful colony of outsiders, in a sense, for none even of the regular boarders had any roots in the city and few remained very long. When in 1854 the Pundit Club was formed by Lewis H. Morgan and Dr. Chester Dewey, a nucleus for cultural intercourse was provided, more typically Rochester in character. President Anderson was a newcomer and Professors Kendrick and Raymond likewise arrived with the university, but Dr. McIlwaine had six and Morgan ten years of Rochester residence, while Dr. Dewey and the Honorable Harvey Humphrey had spent long and useful years in the city. E. Peshine Smith and young John N. Pomeroy, who was admitted the next year, had, except for their college years in the East, practically grown up in Rochester. All save the youthful Pomeroy and the white-haired Dewey and Humphrey were in their late thirties with many productive years ahead.<sup>209</sup>

Among this choice group of scholars, E. Peshine Smith alone provided a link by marriage with the older Rochester families. The Rochesters, the Wards, the Strongs, and the associated families of the early days had their own agreeable circles, led in the mid-fifties by the Freeman Clarkes, especially after their removal from the spacious Clarke villa on the northern outskirts back into Jonathan Child's elegant mansion on Washington Street. Except for scattered homesteads on the city's outskirts, most of these families were clustered in the Third Ward where a refined but genial society was now traditional.<sup>210</sup>

Other equally self-contained groups were busily absorbed in their special affairs. Thus the humble residence of a learned butcher, Patrick O'Meara, served as a focal center for many heated discussions over the relative merits of varied Irish patriots—discussions which frequently ended with the recitation of a long poem by the host or the singing of old folk melodies by his assembled countrymen. In like fashion many local humanitarians foregathered on Sunday afternoons at the Anthony homestead a mile west of the city.<sup>211</sup> Temperance reformers, musical clubs, special immigrant and trade societies, enjoyed their respective bonds of fellowship, helping to round out the now diversified urban pattern. William A. Reynolds as vice president of the Athenaeum and Mechanics Association supplied permanent leadership to the one organization that drew into itself the wide and varied elements of the com-

<sup>208</sup> *Life and Letters of John H. Raymond*, p. 260.

<sup>209</sup> William C. Morey, "Reminiscences of the Pundit Club," *R. H. S., Pub.*, II, 99-109; "John N. Pomeroy," *D. A. B.*, XV, 52-53.

<sup>210</sup> Charles F. Pond, "History of the Third Ward," *R. H. S., Pub.*, I, 71-81; see above, p. 333.

<sup>211</sup> William H. Samson, "Studies in Local History"; XLVIII, Scrapbook No. 125, p. 58, *Roch. Hist. Soc.*; Harper, *Susan B. Anthony*, I, 60-61.



munity, encouraging the assimilation of contributions made by the best minds throughout the country.<sup>212</sup>

Probably no one of the Athenaeum's distinguished visitors made a more searching and timely address than that delivered by Lewis H. Morgan in January, 1852. With unusual insight, Morgan pictured Rochester and most of the Western World as torn between two fundamental trends: Diffusion and Centralization.<sup>213</sup> On the one hand he saw the diffusion of knowledge, the diffusion of respectability, the diffusion of property, trade, and benevolent sentiments, while on the other hand, strong autocratic forces in the Old World and strong economic forces in the New were striving to concentrate and centralize power. Morgan, rejoicing over the large measure of diffusion evident in Rochester, confidently predicted that as long as capital was sufficiently diffused to make labor essentially independent and able to enjoy a fair share of its products, and as long as the other four essentials were sufficiently diffused, a thriving and happy community would persist.<sup>214</sup>

It was a pleasant outlook, but Edwin Scrantom, who knew Rochester more intimately, felt less confident. He had witnessed the rise and fall of many ambitious enterprises, the coming and going of countless residents, and possibly he had imbibed at Third Church some of Dr. A. G. Hall's skepticism concerning the nature of progress.<sup>215</sup> In any case, the prospects of his own commission business had compelled him to move from his comfortable Willowbank into more cramped quarters on North Sophia Street. Nevertheless, Edwin Scrantom, pausing on May 1, 1852, to commemorate his arrival at the site of Rochester forty years before, penned the first of his long succession of reminiscences of the early days. The remarkable changes that had transformed the place into a busy city since his youth were a sure sign of something, but despite his growing years Scrantom was not able to say just what the sign portended. His aged father had been laid to rest in Mount Hope two years before,<sup>216</sup> and Edwin, having lost much of the optimism of the thirties and forties, was content to recall past scenes and events as he had observed them.<sup>217</sup>

<sup>212</sup> *Union*, Apr. 19, 1855; see above, pp. 345-346.

<sup>213</sup> Morgan as well as his young friend, E. Peshine Smith, may have been reading the works of the latter's master, Henry C. Carey, for Carey's *Past, Present, and Future*, already in the Athenaeum library, foreshadowed in some respects this analysis. Thomas Dick, *On the Improvement of Society by the Diffusion of Knowledge*, was likewise available.

<sup>214</sup> Lewis H. Morgan, *Diffusion Against Centralization* (Rochester, 1852). Morgan was likewise called upon for addresses before neighboring lyceum audiences. See *Democrat*, Jan. 8, 1853; *Union*, Feb. 4, 1853.

<sup>215</sup> A. G. Hall, *Progress: A Discourse* (Rochester, 1853).

<sup>216</sup> Other prominent leaders of earlier days were likewise passing on: Dr. Matthew Brown and Frederick Whittlesey in 1851, Everard Peck and Azel Ensworth in 1854, Mrs. Levi Ward and Abraham Schermerhorn in 1855, to mention but a few.

<sup>217</sup> *Democrat*, May 3, Oct. 4, 8, 12, 1852.

Age was creeping up more rapidly on the now venerable Judge Ashley Sampson, who likewise indulged in lengthy reminiscences of the community's vigorous youth.<sup>218</sup> Many indeed were looking back, but many more looked ahead, and the editor of the *Advertiser*, always prone to optimistic forecasts, boldly estimated that the city would increase to at least 60,000 by 1860 and go forward to new industrial and cultural achievements.<sup>219</sup>

A "Gothamite," visiting Rochester in the spring of 1855, described it at some length as the Mysterious City. The mysterious disappearance of William Morgan, the mysterious plates of Joseph Smith, the mysterious rappings of the Fox Sisters had all appeared in its vicinity, and now the mysterious disappearance of Emma Moore was the talk of the town and the country round.<sup>220</sup> But the greatest mystery to the Gothamite was the failure of Rochester's citizens to exploit the full power of the water resources which he observed dashing over three successive falls into the gorge.<sup>221</sup> Unfortunately the visitor was observing a spring flood, and had he returned a few months later when much of the normal stream was diverted into the canal, he might have realized that Rochester's spring-time had passed and that its future growth would depend upon an unfolding of its new human resources and other advantages, for the potentialities of the water-power era had been largely developed by the mid-fifties.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>218</sup> *Union*, Mar. 29, 31, Apr. 5, 7, 11, 13, 1855.

<sup>219</sup> *Advertiser*, Feb. 10, 1851. The population in 1860 reached only 48,204, and nearly another decade slipped by before 60,000 was passed.

<sup>220</sup> J. McMahon, *The Rochester Mystery* (Rochester, 1855).

<sup>221</sup> *Union*, Apr. 19, 1855.

<sup>222</sup> *Memorial of the Inhabitants of Rochester interested in the use of the waters of the Genesee for hydraulic purposes, to the Legislature of New York* (Rochester, 1852); *Memorial of the Owners of Water of the Genesee River at Rochester* (Rochester, 1853).



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